

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements  
For the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

In the subject of

**COMPARATIVE EDUCATION**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**JANUARY 2018**

## DECLARATION

I declare that “ Lived experiences of black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa” is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my family, My husband Mr Themba Aubrey Nkumane, my two lovely daughters: Simphiwe Nolzwe Nkumane an Ayanda Phumelele Nkumane and my four wonderful grandchildren: Ofentse Sabelo Mtsweni, the twins;Roanda Anathi Ofhani Tshidada, Ronewa Anele Ofhenya Tshidada and Omphile Thabile Mtsweni.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank God Almighty for giving me strength to complete this study

I would like to thank Professor Petro van Niekerk, my supervisor for her dedication and perseverance and for keeping up with me for all these years.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the following people who encouraged me in various ways never to give up with this study:

My friends at Unisa:

Prof Rebotile Machaisa, Prof Veli Gasa, Dr Angie Setlhako and Dr Mubi Mavuso

My colleagues:

Prof Thulani Zengele, Prof Victor Pitsoe

## ABSTRACT

This study, *The lived experiences of black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa*, investigated the factors that impacted on the lives of the black women academics at Unisa in the College of Education. It was a phenomenological study wherein the participants shared their lived experiences through in-depth interviews. This was a qualitative study that employed an interpretive paradigm. This permitted the view that reality is multiple layered. It took into account the various viewpoints of the participants as different realities that were narrated in this report by using the verbatim quotations of the participants.

The findings revealed that Black women academic lecturers at Unisa faced challenges in the teaching and learning area. They had no ownership of modules that they taught because they were not primary lectures. They experienced racism and alienation from both Black and White academics that have long been at Unisa. White staff questioned their qualifications and, they received no orientation in the teaching of ODL modules. In the research area, challenges concerned the supervision of postgraduate students and article writing for publication. It also arose that they received less support from senior colleagues and from their supervisors in their personal studies. There was general complaint about the 2010 Unisa mentorship programme but there was commendation of the recent CEDU mentorship programme. The participants felt that Unisa should introduce academic support programmes that would cater for staff over the age of 50 because the current programmes only cater for those below 50 years of age.

## KEY TERMS

Lived experiences

Black

Women

Academics

Researchers

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AQIP	Academic Qualification Improvement Programme
BMR	Bureau of Market Research
CEDU	College of Education
CSD	Centre for Science Development
GST	Gender schema theory
NRF	National Research Foundation
PORT	Postgraduate Online Research Training
PWI	Predominantly White Institutions
PWIs	Previously White Institutions
RCD	Research Capacity Development
RPSC	Research Permission Sub-committee
SRIHDC	Senate Research and Innovation and Higher Degrees Committee
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCRN	University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
UK	United Kingdom
UNISA	University of South Africa
UR	University of Rhodesia
US	United States
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
WIR	Women in Research
WIRI	Women-in-Research Initiative
YALP	Young Academics Leadership Programme

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

*“Academic freedom is a long-standing principle in higher education, which for centuries has put the responsibility on higher education teaching personnel<sup>5</sup> to exercise their intellectual judgement and to explore avenues of scientific and philosophical discovery for the benefit of their discipline, their institutions, their immediate society and the international community” (Cemmel, 2009:1).*

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Cemmel’s (2009:1) assertion highlights that “academic freedom in higher education places responsibility on the academic staff to undertake scientific and philosophical investigations that will lead to discoveries of new knowledge that will add value to the disciplines in their institutions, to their local communities and even to international communities.” The responsibility of producing new knowledge implies that academics have an important role to play in undertaking research that will benefit society as a whole. Ampofo (2009:35) attests to this and says, “Research, whatever form it takes, is important for the progress of societies, to the extent that it helps us to better understand them”.

Research has recently emerged as a primary focus area for the higher education institution sector not only in South Africa but also in the world over. The University of South Africa (Unisa) is no exception. The participation of Black academic women researchers in research cannot be downplayed. It is imperative that Black academic women engage in research activities in order to discover new knowledge and to form part of the local and international research communities. Ampofo (2009:48) emphasises that “Research provides intellectual meaning and sense of identity, legitimacy and status within the academic community.” The participation of Black women academics in research activities is a practical concern hence this study

investigates *lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa*.

As an introduction, this chapter provides the introduction and background of the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, research aim and objectives. It also gives a brief discussion of the research design, paradigm, approach and methodology, data collection and strategies of the data analysis. Population, sampling and chapter division is also given attention. Ethical compliance is discussed to indicate that correct ethical procedures were followed during this research.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

The Unisa Women in Research (WIR) Audit Survey of 2008, commissioned by the Unisa Research Directorate and conducted by Unisa's Bureau of Market Research (BMR), reported that "the majority of participants in that audit survey were white women" (Tustin & Moshoeu 2008: viii). The audit did not mention Black academic women researchers in the aforementioned audit. Ever since its establishment, Unisa has always had Black academic women staff but the 2008 Audit did not mention them. It raised a concern for me as a Black woman academic at Unisa. It raised the question: What were the causes for the non-participation or reduced participation of the Black academic women researchers in that audit?

This primary aim of the study was to gather narratives about the lived experiences of Black academic women researchers at Unisa. It aimed to establish the factors that impacted their academic lives as well as their career advancement. Recent literature on higher education in the United States (US) revealed that Black women were still marginalised in the academic world and found themselves in an unwelcoming environment which reminded them that they worked in spaces that were not meant for them (Tillman, 2012). Tillman (2012:124) further highlights that "Black female academics endured difficult circumstances in the academy in the USA especially in the Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), no matter how qualified they were." Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 13) point out that, "although women began to access the academy in big numbers recently, the female faculty lagged behind their male

counterparts in terms of productivity, recognition and compensation.” Linked to the above factors, it also emerged that Black faculty needed mentoring because they often lacked the complex networks that their White male peers enjoyed. Black women academics had to mentor the Black students from the historically disadvantaged groups and were expected to ‘mommy’ them just like their own children.

In the United Kingdom (UK) literature revealed that “Black women were misrecognised whenever they were in the company of their White colleagues in the research sites” (Maylor, 2009: 55; see section 2.5.1.2). Their White colleagues never paid attention and claimed not to have observed any wrongdoing when the Black women complained about the misrecognition. Racism was reported to be rife in the UK because Black women academics were perceived as ‘helpers’ of their White colleagues at the research sites and their White colleagues never understood why their Black colleagues were unhappy with that. Black women academics were denied access to research funding. Easterly and Ricard (2011: 64) point out that “cases of unconscious bias and gender discrimination in academia were plentiful.”

African literature revealed that “in the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) Black women academics were faced with racial discrimination which was coupled with masculine alienation” (Dorsey, 1989: 344; see section 2.5.2.1). Women had to assume roles of being tea girls who made tea for the senior male academics in exchange for academic guidance. Black women were consciously excluded from collaborative networks that mostly consisted of male academics. As in the UK, Black women, academics were perceived as academic mothers who were expected to nurture and mentor Black students. At UZ, men were reported to move faster up the academic ranks than women. At the Ghanaian University of Lagon, women were faced with lack of support for academic development even from top management. While men were funded to further their studies overseas; women had to seek their own funding and hence few women academics studied overseas. Women were not given adequate support as men (Prah, 2002: 29 and see section 2.5.2.2). As at the University of Zimbabwe at Lagon University, there was a belief that the place of a woman was in the kitchen and women were also expected to act as academic mothers. At the University of Nigeria, Black academic women lacked the required qualifications. They played multiple roles



as working women, mothers and had heavy workloads at the university that impeded their academic advancement (Yusuf, 2014: 284; see section 2.5.2.2). In addition, at the University of Nigeria women also lacked adequate networks that affected their chances of faster academic development and promotion.

In Southern Africa, Mabokela (2002:19) (see section 2.5.2.3) found that women academics had to endure discriminatory working conditions in the historically White institutions. Women academics recently entering the academy had to fulfil the requirements of the new criteria for an appointment that demanded that academics be in possession of a PhD, doctoral degree or equivalent terminal degree. Hence, many Black women academics occupy low ranks of junior lecturer and lecturer in the academy because they lack the necessary qualifications. Black academics are not promoted to the higher levels of senior lecturer and professor. As pointed out in the other universities, South African women academics lack academic support from senior academic staff and have to endure a heavy teaching load. In South Africa, culture was also cited as an impediment to Black women's academic mobility.

In the light of the above, it is essential to establish the factors and challenges that have affected the lives of Black academic women researchers at Unisa. South Africa has a history of racism and Black women academics belong to the previously disadvantaged groups who have just begun to access the academy in large numbers.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Morley (2010: 536) refers to the UNESCO 1998 Article four which highlighted that “a decade ago, the World Declaration on Higher Education identified equitable participation for women as an urgent priority for the sector. This included changing gendered patterns of participation at different levels within the system of higher education, and across all disciplines of study.” Women's participation in research has become a significant concern at all universities and Black academic women researchers are expected to participate in research collaboration and make a meaningful contribution to research.

Tsikana (2007:28) highlighted that the “1980’s and 1990’s were significant years in the shaping of the University of Ghana and other African universities.” According to him, it was during that period that finance became the most decisive factor in the life of universities and he recalled that “the fortunes of the university also came to be determined not only by national governments but also by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. So funding, cost-sharing, income generation, access and strategic planning became the main preoccupations of universities, replacing core concerns such as curriculum, teaching and research.”

Drawing on Tsikana’s (2007) assertion, it is imperative that Black academic women researchers at Unisa generate income for the university through research publications. Their omission in the Unisa WIR Audit of 2008 indicated a gap and raised this question: where does their absence place them in terms of academic development? This was crucial for me as a Black academic woman at Unisa. In the article: *10 Steps to develop Black professors*, (City Press, 2014, July 20), Professor Mangcu, University of Cape Town, observed that “it was worrisome, that South Africa’s best universities do not have Black presence to speak of at the highest level of the academic rank - the professoriate.” She further stated “the situation was dire when it came to women. It stated that only 34% or 0, 85 of the total number of South African professors were women.” In a follow-up article, titled: *Where are our Black academics?* Emanuel (City Press, 2014, August, 4) highlighted that “the latest available data from the department of higher education and training from 2012 showed that nationwide, 76% professors were White, 5% were Indian and 4.5% were Coloured.” Black women did not feature and that was a matter of concern. These observations link to the non-participation of Black academic women researchers in the 2008 Unisa WIR audit and together they indicate a need for research to be undertaken to determine the experiences of Black academic women researchers at Unisa. To date, a study of this nature has not been conducted at Unisa.

### **1.3.1 Main research question and sub-questions**

The main research question in this dissertation is formulated as follows: *What factors impact on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa?*

The main research question is sub-divided into the following questions:

- What challenges do Black women academic researchers experience in teaching and learning at Unisa?
- What have been the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa?
- How have these researchers experienced the mentoring programme at Unisa?
- What programmes does Unisa have in place to accelerate the development of the academic staff?

## **1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main aim of this study was: *to determine the factors that impact on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa.*

The objectives of this research were:

- to determine the challenges that Black women academic researchers experience in teaching and learning at Unisa;
- to establish the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa;
- to explore the views of Black women academic researchers on the mentoring programme at Unisa;
- to explore the programmes presented by Unisa to accelerate the development of academic staff.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20), the research design is “a plan for generating empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research question.” It is, therefore, a research map that indicates the direction that the research will take. Zikmund (1991:42) defines it as “a master plan specifying the methods and procedures.” A research design is a strategy that outlines the procedure that the research will follow as well as the research methods that the research will employ. It explains from whom the data will be collected, where it will be collected, under what conditions the data will be obtained, what methods of data collection will be used and what happens to the participants, According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:20), research designs are classified into four major categories: the quantitative, qualitative, mixed method and analytic designs. This study followed a qualitative design.

#### **1.5.1.1 Research paradigm**

It is essential that I first explain the research paradigm before I can embark on the explanation of the qualitative approach. Burrell and Morgan (1979: 24), explain that to be located in a particular paradigm is “to view the world in a unique way.” This suggests that each individual views the world in a particular way different from how the next person views it. If each individual has a different world view, it follows that each researcher has a different view of the world and approaches research from a uniquely different angle. People do not see things the same way. The researcher’s worldview influences their research, research approach and methods.

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006:2) add that a paradigm “sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research. Without nominating a paradigm as the first step, there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design”. The above explanation highlights that a paradigm influences the whole research process. It consists of the intent and the motivation for conducting research and these occur in a researcher's mind before the actual research takes

place. From this explanation one gathers that a paradigm is the first step: “there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006: 2). Williams (1998:3) acknowledges that within the research process “the beliefs a researcher holds will reflect in the way the research is designed, how data is both collected and analysed and how research results are presented.”

It is, therefore, essential that the researcher identifies his or her paradigm. In this study, the interpretive paradigm was followed in exploring the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. It is discussed in detail in the methodology Section 3.3.1. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006:3) further explain that the interpretivist or constructivist approaches to research have the intention of understanding the world of human experience and hence the interpretivist or constructivist researcher tend to rely upon the participant's views of the situation studied. The research report of this study was based on the views of the participants on their lived academic experiences at Unisa.

#### ***1.5.1.2 Qualitative research approach***

McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 20) identify four major categories of research designs or approaches: the quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and the analytical approaches. The qualitative approach is the most suitable approach for investigating the lived experiences of Black academic women researchers at Unisa because it affords the researcher an opportunity of understanding and reconstructing the reality of the participants' experiences from their standpoint. This is also because it encourages the use of the words of the participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:323) concur, “The goal of qualitative research is to understand participants from their own point of view, in their own voice.” In other words, the focus is on the meaning expressed by the participants. Kraus (2005) also points out that the goal of the qualitative investigation is to understand the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the point of view of those involved in the situation of interest.

Taking the viewpoint of the other is facilitated by the use of interviews in qualitative research. Hence, much of what is reported in qualitative studies consists of participant's perspectives. Babbie and Mouton (2007:271) also highlight that qualitative research is an attempt to understand people in terms of their own definitions of their worlds. Research activities are thus centred on an "insider perspective on social action" with sensitivity to the context in which participants operate according to their frame of reference and history. The qualitative research attempts to arrive at an understanding of how people make sense of their lives. This study of the lived experiences of the Black academic women researchers at Unisa was utilised through the use of phenomenological interviews which were conducted at Unisa, the real world of work of the participants. The following sections discuss the research type and research methods.

#### **1.5.1.3 Research type: *The narrative inquiry***

Connelly and Clandinin (1990:3) maintain "because of its focus on experience and qualities of life and education, the narrative is situated in a matrix of qualitative research." The narrative inquiry method is suitable for this study because of its dialogical nature. It is a way of understanding experience because it encourages collaboration between the researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:20). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) further explain that narrative inquiry gives an enquirer an opportunity to get into the "midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experience that make up people's lives, both individual and social." Narrative inquiry in simple terms deals with stories that are lived and told. A two-way process involves the enquirer and the storyteller who in this case is a participant. It cannot happen without any interaction between the researcher and the participants. The narratives related in the phenomenological interviews result in a collaborative document that contains mutually constructed stories based on the lives of the participants.

### **1.5.2 Research methods**

Research methods refer to the way in which the researcher conducts the research. Qualitative research methods, which include a selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations, are explained in the following sections.

#### **1.5.2.1 *Selection of participants***

A sample of participants is identified from the population and it is a group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:119). The population for this study were the Black women academic researchers at Unisa; the sample comprised Black women academic researchers from the College of Education (CEDU), Unisa where I am also a staff member. The results of this study are thus based on the sample of this study; Black women academic researchers from the CEDU and cannot be generalised to the whole population, that is Black women academic researchers at Unisa.

This study used nonprobability sampling because it does not include any type of random selection from a population but instead, the researcher used subjects who happened to be accessible or who represented specific characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:125). There are three types of nonprobability sampling: convenience sampling, quota sampling and purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling was suitable for the investigation of the experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa because it enabled me to select particular elements from the population that was informative about the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:126). The sample size consisted of four Black women academic researchers at Unisa with different years of teaching experience. Qualitative sampling requires a selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:325). Choosing participants who have experience ranging from 5-13 years at Unisa provided information-rich participants. The participants were knowledgeable and informative about the research activities at Unisa.

### **1.5.2.2 *Data collection techniques***

Data collection techniques concern the instruments used to collect information to address the research questions. Data can be in the form of field notes of shared experiences, journal records, interview transcripts, others' observations, storytelling, letter writing, autobiographical writing, documents such as class plans and newsletters, and writing such as rules, principles, pictures, metaphors, and personal philosophies (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:7). In this study, data were collected by means of phenomenological interviews. A digital voice recorder was used to store the data. Field notes were also taken.

#### **a) *Phenomenological in-depth interviews***

The central tool for data collection in the narrative inquiry is the unstructured interview. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:352) refer to unstructured interviews as phenomenological interviews that are in-depth in nature. Hennik, Hutter and Bailey (2011:109) state that, "in-depth interviews are normally effective when used to elicit individual and personal experiences about specific issues." I employed one-on-one in-depth interviews because they afforded me, as an interviewer, an opportunity to move the conversation in any direction that came up and most importantly they also allowed each participant an opportunity to narrate her academic experience at her own pace and space. McMillan and Schumacher (2006:352) state that, "in-depth interviews are used to study the meanings or essence of a lived experience among selected participants as they relate what they experienced, how it was experienced, and finally the meanings assigned to the experience." I sent e-mails to the purposefully selected Black women academic lecturers in the CEDU, inviting them to an interview and requesting a suitable date. On acceptance of my invitations, I made appointments for the interviews, which took place at the respective offices of the participants at the main campus, Unisa.



**b)        *Digital voice recorder***

A digital voice recorder recorded the in-depth interviews. Three of the four interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants as per request; one interview was conducted in my office on mutual agreement between the participant and me.

**c)        *Field notes of shared experience***

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:325) suggest that multimethod strategies of data collection permit triangulation of data across inquiry techniques. Different strategies may yield different insights about the topic of interest and increase the credibility of the findings. During the data collection process, I also took field notes, noting body language and attitudes during the interviews.

**1.5.2.3   *Data analysis***

The recorded data collected through the in-depth interviews were transcribed in order to facilitate analysis. After the data were transcribed, I identified small pieces or segments from the participants' words that stood alone. McMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367) explain that "a data segment is a text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of relevant information. It can be any size, a word, a sentence, a few lines of text, or several pages." The segments that were identified derived from the data about the experiences of Black women academic and were coded. The coding of the segments meant that those small pieces of data were assigned a meaning. The data suggested the codes. After the data were coded, categories or themes emerged from the data. Those categories or themes represented major ideas that emerged from the data. The narratives in Chapter 4 are based on the actual words of the participants (See section 4.4).

**1.5.2.4   *Trustworthiness***

Guba and Lincoln (1998) mention five strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the research results: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and

applicability. These strategies were applied to ensure trustworthiness and are fully elaborated on in Chapter 3 of this study.

#### **1.5.2.5 *Ethical considerations***

Terreblanche, Durrheim and Painter (2007:64) stress that ethics is an indispensable part of research to protect the welfare of the research participants. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:117) state, “Ethics are generally concerned with beliefs about what is right and wrong from a moral perspective. Research ethics are focused on what is morally proper and improper when engaged with participants or when accessing archival data.”

Before I began the process of data collection, I applied for ethical clearance from the Unisa Research Ethics Committee. After receipt of the Ethical Clearance Certificate with the Reference number: 2014 OCTOBER/4726480/MC (See Appendix D), I applied for Institutional permission to conduct research involving Unisa staff which I was granted with Ref #: 2015\_RPSC\_088 (See Appendix E). In my application for ethical clearance, I made an undertaking to adhere to all ethical requirements when conducting this research study.

Before I conducted the interviews, I sent the selected participants individual letters that requested them to participate in an interview (See attached, Appendix E ). The letter explained the purpose of the study and explicitly informed each participant of confidentiality, anonymity and their right to withdraw their participation from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

Upon receipt of a positive reply from each participant, I then made an appointment through e-mails for the date of an interview. On the day of the interview, I requested each participant to read the consent form and to sign it if she voluntarily wanted to participate in my study (See attached, Appendix H). Farrimond (2013:109) emphasises the importance of seeking informed consent before one might conduct an interview.

## **1.6 EXPLANATION OF CORE CONCEPTS**

This section gives definitions of fundamental concepts that are found in this study as they are to be understood in relation to the research problem and from my perspective as a researcher. The concepts are lived experiences, academic, Black women, research and researcher.

### **1.6.1 Lived experience**

Manen (2004:1) refers to Dilthey (1985) who defines lived experience as, “a reflexive or self-given awareness that inheres in the temporality of consciousness of life as we live it.” Dilthey’s explanation suggests that lived experience resides temporarily in the mind of a person who has experienced something.

Manen (2004) further refers to Gadamer (1975) who highlights that there are two dimensions of meaning of lived experience. There is the immediacy of experience and the content of what was experienced. Gadamer explains that both meanings have methodological significance for qualitative inquiry. The meanings refer to the immediacy with which something is grasped and which precedes all interpretation, reworking and communication. According to him, lived experience forms the starting point for inquiry, reflection, and interpretation. Manen (2004) refines Gadamer’s point by stating that in contemporary human science, lived experience remains a central methodological notion that aims to provide concrete insights into the qualitative meanings of the phenomena in people’s lives.

Lived experience, according to the above explanations, resides in the consciousness of a person who has experienced something. It is also reflexive in nature as a person thinks about what happened after it has occurred. Due to its nature, lived experience is a process of inquiry because in trying to remember what happened, one starts reworking the order of the experience, interprets it and communicates the experience by telling it. A person then attaches meaning to experience after it has occurred not before. The process of reflecting means looking back; hence there is inter-relationship between experience and qualitative inquiry.

Chandler and Munday (2011:1) in the Dictionary of Media of Communication define lived experience as, “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people. This type of experience may also refer to knowledge of people gained from direct face-to-face interaction rather than a technical medium.” This explanation highlights that lived experience is personal, in that to have had a lived experience one must have been directly involved in a particular situation. Lived experience is acquired through self-involvement hence it is described as the first-hand experience of a particular situation. Lived experience is not self-constructed nor is it technical in nature. It consists of the experiences of the activities and encounters in everyday life as an experience, and it is, therefore, a reality and not a perceived experience.

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa who have experienced particular situations in their academic careers as researchers. It is their real lived academic experiences that are not their perceptions about their careers. MerleauPonty (1962) also in Manen (2004:1) rightly sums it up when he says, “The world is not what I think, but what I live through.” The study describes and presents the lived experiences of the Black women academics at Unisa as their “lived through” experiences. If one wants to study the world as “lived through” one has to start with a “direct description of our experience as it is” (MerleauPonty, 1962 in Manen 1962; 2004:1).

### **1.6.2 Black woman**

According to Urban Profile.com the term Black woman refers to “a female human being of African descent”. The term Black women in this study was used to refer to Black women of African descent and Black women who speak an African language. The Wikipedia Free encyclopaedia gives a clearer definition of the term Black people as a term that is “used in certain countries to classify people often on the basis of racial or ethnic classification. People who are described as Black, either have some degree of Sub-Saharan African ancestry, or are perceived to be dark-skinned compared to other racial groups. In South Africa, racial segregation originated from the laws of the apartheid regime after 1948. According to the South African History Online, the South

African Population Registration Act, Act no 30 of 1950 provided that all South Africans be racially classified into three categories: White, Black, and Coloured. According to this act, Indians fell under the Coloured category. The criteria used to determine the qualification into each of these categories was based on appearance and descent. The Act described a White person as one whose parents were both White, Coloureds as people who were neither White nor Black and Blacks were defined as being members of an African race or tribe. In this study, the term Black women refers to women of an African race or African tribe.

### **1.6.3 Academic**

The concept academic refers to all permanently employed academic employees and those employees who have been designated by Council to do research (Unisa Research and Innovation Policy, 2012:5). Word IQ states that an academic is a person who works as a researcher (and usually a teacher) at a university or similar institution. A more precise definition is by the MSN Encarta Dictionary. According to this source, an academic is a university teacher: somebody teaching or conducting research at an institution of higher learning.

### **1.6.4 Research**

O'Donnell (2012:1) defines research in two ways: as a noun which means a systematic investigation to establish facts, a search for knowledge and as a means to find out in a systematic or in a scientific manner. According to O'Donnell, research is a systematic investigation to confirm facts. It is a search for new knowledge. Research is a systematically planned endeavour to do a scientific investigation.

Djellal, Francoz, Gallouj, Jacquin and Jacquin (2003:427) supplement O'Donnell's assertion that research is systematic and states that, "research ... comprise of creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of "man," culture and society and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications." Djellal et al., (ibid) add that the knowledge acquired through the systematic order can be used for new applications. Research

then is a systematic manner of investigation to confirm facts or to produce new knowledge in order to apply that knowledge in new situations that involve a man, culture and society. Research cannot be undertaken by any other person but by a researcher.

### **1.6.5 Researcher**

According to Postgraduate Online Research Training (PORT) (2010:1) a researcher can be defined as a scholar who can, or will in time through a learning experience, demonstrate:

- Specialised knowledge or expertise, conceptual and intellectual capacities such as the ability to identify and frame critical problems, to think critically and analytically, and generate and communicate interesting and original insights;
- Academic skills such as the ability to produce scholarly high-quality written work and research papers, clearly composed so that the argument, and the evidence that supports it, can be grasped by the intended audience;
- Research skills such as the ability to use sources effectively, to gather and organise information, to analyse text, data and theory;
- Personal attributes such as the ambition and ability to work to high standards, to take the initiative and responsibility, to be well organised in one's procedures and balanced in one's judgements, to collaborate well with others where appropriate, and to take on board and incorporate constructive critics;
- Social skills such as the ability to liaise with students, colleagues and academics from other institutions in an effective and appropriate way, to be able to adjust to different circumstances required by academia and to integrate into the broader community of scholars;
- A researcher, according to the points cited above in PORT is someone who has specialised knowledge and intellectual capabilities to identify and frame critical problems to produce high-quality research papers. It is someone who has the ability liaise with students and colleagues from other institutions in an appropriate way and is able to integrate into the broader community of

scholars by using sources effectively to compose an argument with the evidence that supports it to be grasped by the intended audience.

The definition by PORT is supplemented and clarified by the following definition offered by Diellal et al., (2003:428). This definition states that, “researchers are professionals in the natural sciences or the social sciences and humanities engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, services, methods, and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned.” From this definition, one derives that researchers are professionals in either natural or social sciences who conceptualise and create new knowledge, products, methods and manage research projects.

## **1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The study has five chapters that are divided as follows:

**Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study**, presented the introduction, rationale for the study, problem statement, central research question and sub-questions, research aim and objectives. The research design, paradigm, approach, research type, methodology as well as different data collection strategies were explained. The data analysis was explained in order to give an idea of how collected data would be analysed. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also briefly explained and critical concepts defined.

**Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and literature review**, The first part of this chapter paid attention to the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study; gender schema, the sociocultural theory and Africana womanism. The conceptual framework part gave an explanation of the core concepts found in this study. A detailed literature review on lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at universities included literature on Western universities from the US and the UK. African universities considered were from Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria and Southern Africa.

**Chapter 3: Research approach and methodology: narrative and story in research**, presented a detailed description of the research design and methodologies employed to gather the data on lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The chapter further gave a detailed discussion and explanation of the data analysis steps and procedures followed in data analysis.

**Chapter 4: Presentation and discussion of findings: emerging themes** paid attention to data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the collected data. Data interpretation was based on the words of the participants.

**Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion and recommendations**, delivered the summary of the whole study, synopsis of the findings from literature reviews and synopsis from this empirical study. Research conclusions were given as answers to the research questions that were stated in Section 1.3.1. Recommendations were presented according to the findings. The study also gave recommendations regarding avenues for further study. This chapter also gave limitations of the study and concluding remarks.

## **1.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In this introductory chapter, the study presented the background of the essential elements and underpinnings of the whole research. The problem statement explained that research has become a primary focus area within many higher education institutions and that the participation of women in research has become a significant concern within the broader South African higher education institution sector.

The research question was to find out the factors that impacted on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The sub-questions were provided. The aim of the study was to determine the factors that impacted on the lives of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The objectives were also provided. The chapter briefly discussed the research design, paradigm and methodology upon which the study was based. The chapter concluded with a chapter outline of the study.



The ensuing chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and literature review. Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at universities are examined in detail.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

*“A man who reviews the old so as to find out the new is qualified to teach others”*  
(Hofstee, 2006:91).

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 as an introductory chapter to this study presented the background of the study. It also argued that research has become the primary focus area in the higher education sector. It is essential, therefore, to investigate the factors that impact on the lives of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. This chapter pays attention to the theoretical framework and literature review. The first part presents three interrelated theoretical frameworks that equally inform this study, namely Gender Schema theory, Sociocultural Theory and Africana Womanism theories. The second part presents a literature review of the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in Western countries taking into consideration the US and the UK. In African universities, the researcher was guided by the availability of the material, hence Zimbabwe (East Africa), Ghana and Nigeria (West Africa) and South Africa were taken into consideration.

#### **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Swason (2013: 2) supports the application of a theoretical framework when doing empirical research because it adds value in any study and it does not only explain but also predicts and leads to a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation. He further clarifies that while the theoretical framework introduces the theory it also describes why the research problem under study exists. Schurink (2009: 86) adds “a theoretical framework of an empirical study refers to the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that informs research.” The concepts, lived experiences and Black women academic researchers, are pointers for the relevant theoretical frameworks for this study. Gender schema theory, sociocultural

theory and Africana womanism were the selected theoretical frameworks to frame this study.

### **2.2.1 Gender schema theory**

It is essential to explain the two terms in this theory: *schema* and *theory* before discussing gender schema as a theory. The word theory was explained above as “a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that informs research” (Schurink, 2009: 86). Johnson (2009:3) describes a *schema* as a network of cognitive organisations that influence how an individual perceives self, others and situations. He further states that a schema is “a mental representation of a broad range of attributes, traits, and behaviours that are associated with women or men in a particular culture.” Plant and Stanton (2014:4) add that schemata are generic knowledge structures in memory that serve to guide interpretation of external information.

The above explanations reveal that a schema or schemata is a mental framework that stores perceptions associated with men and women in a particular culture and that schema influences how an individual views oneself, other people and situations around him. It is a structure that, in the memory of a person, guides the interpretation of external knowledge.

There are various pioneers of the Gender Schema Theory (GST). Bartlett (1932) as cited in Plant and Stanton (2012:12) is recognised as the person who provided the first formal definition of the GST. For Bartlett, schemata are perceived as active organisations of past experiences that are similar to mental templates. Piaget, on the other hand, views schemata in relation to child development. He emphasises that schemata “are the building blocks of knowledge and that schemata form the mental framework that is created as children interact with their physical and social environment” (Plant & Stanton, 2012:7). Later in 1981 Bem (in Johnson, 2009:3) defined the GST as a process of cognitive development of gender through which children learn to assimilate content-specific information into more abstract cognitive structures that are used to process and organise what the person perceives.

The common thread in the above definitions is that the GST is a mental framework that is developed during the cognitive development phase in childhood in a particular culture and it influences a person's perception about him or herself, about other people and other situations that surround him or her. It is also related to how a particular individual organises and interprets external knowledge especially with regard to gender in general.

Johnson (2009:4) further highlights the several propositions that guide GST, as this theory is popularly known. The five propositions are from Bem's work and they are regarded as central to GST. They are the following:

1. The child learns to link specific items to broader attributes that he or she links to "sex" and "gender" (male or female), and these linkages form the basis for "sex-typing" and cultural myths about female and male characteristics (e.g., associating specific colours, postural cues, clothing, activities etc. with female or male).
2. The child learns to use a complex network of sex-related associations to process new information and to make sense of cues that he or she perceives, thus making perception a constructive process (e.g., a preschool-aged child who has learned to identify boys and girls will have difficulty establishing gender for a person with a girl's name who looks sex-indeterminate because she has short hair, a lower pitched voice than is typical for females, and does not have a visibly accentuated female body type).
3. The self-concept is made meaningful through the gender schema that a child develops such that self-monitoring and evaluation occur through application of the gender schema. There are many daily life examples of making decisions guided by a gender schema about what to say, what to wear, how to present oneself to another person or persons in a specific situation.
4. Once formed, a gender schema is "an anticipatory structure" that works like shorthand to assign gender meanings to self and others when relevant events or cues activate the schema (for example, seeing a woman wearing a flowered print skirt might activate a meaning of structure related to her being a highly feminine woman).

5. Gender schemas are regulative for judgements of what is natural or unnatural, right or wrong, valued or non-valued (e.g., a man who stays at home to care for the children might lead to the judgement that he is weak and relative to his wife).

However, Johnson (2009:4) warns that gender schemas change over time just like cultural practices and they can remain unchanged even when the times have changed. For example, today's youth worldwide cannot easily believe certain occupations are designed for men or women, yet some people still perceive occupations such as a dentist in a male gender schema. We need to be aware too that gender schemas can also persist even when change has occurred.

#### **2.2.1.1 The applicability of Gender Schema Theory to this study**

GST is appropriate for framing this study as it postulates that sex and gender perceptions are developed during childhood in different cultures in which children grow up. GST explains the cognitive development of how males and females perceive themselves, perceive others and other situations. It is responsible for the way in which a person organises any external information in his or her mind. It is, therefore, an appropriate theory to assist in the understanding of how the Black women academic researchers would be perceived in academia in general. The perceptions about particular sex in adulthood have their origin from a particular sociocultural environment or cultural community. The perceptions that are prevalent in various communities are characteristic of a gender schema of a particular community or society. There is then a relationship between gender schema and sociocultural theory. The next section presents a sociocultural theory.

#### **2.2.2 Sociocultural theory**

Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, is known as the pioneer of sociocultural theory (Scott & Palinscar, 2013:1). Wertsch (1991) cited by Scott and Palinscar (2013) identifies three major themes in Vygotsky's writings that explain the interdependence between an individual and the social processes in learning and development.

The first theme is the genetic law of development: the child's cultural development occurs on two planes. The social plane concerns the child's cultural development that first appears in his or her cultural society. Cultural development appears in the psychological plane which occurs within the child. According to this genetic law of development, children participate in joint activities and learn to work together with other people and thus acquire knowledge of the world and culture. The child as a learner during this developmental process is shaped by the broader cultural and historical setting in a particular society but also the child as a unique individual brings something to the interaction that takes place.

The second Vygotskian theme explains the connection between human action and semiotics. The theme states that human activity is mediated by tools and signs, whether on the social or the individual plane. These signs or semiotic means include a number of things such as language, various systems of counting, mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbol systems, works of art, writing, schemes, diagrams, maps, mechanical drawings, computers and all sorts of conventional signs. These semiotic means assist with regard to the co-construction of knowledge and independent problem-solving in future.

The third theme is concerned with the fact that the first two themes must be examined through genetic or developmental analysis. Related to the third theme is Vygotsky's construct of the zone of proximal development also known as ZPD. This approach recommends that learning should be matched to the child's level of development. In this approach, there are two developmental levels; the actual and the potential level. The actual level denotes activities that a child can perform independently while the potential level refers to activities the child can do with assistance. The potential level suggests guided participation where the child can be guided by an adult or can work with more capable peers. The concept of guided participation suggests that cognitive development occurs in a social context and not in a vacuum. Scott and Palinscar (2013:3) state:

*“cognitive development is an apprenticeship- it occurs through guided participation in social activity with companions who support*

*and stretch children's understanding of and skill in using the tools of the culture."*

McLeod (2014: 2) acknowledges that Vygotsky emphasises the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition as he believed firmly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning."

### **2.2.2.1 The applicability of the sociocultural theory to this study**

The above explanation highlights that, according to Vygotsky, culture or social factors play an essential role in shaping the cognitive development of a child. In other words, a child is a product of a particular sociocultural environment in which he or she grows up. The culture of that specific environment tends to influence how a child thinks and perceives things in general. Both the schema and the cognitive development of a young child are formed within a specific culture. For example, children internalise certain cultural or traditional beliefs about women's roles in society due to gender-bound upbringing. If young boys are continuously exposed to an environment where adult women are beaten by men, they are likely to practise the same habit in adulthood. Sociocultural theory is relevant for the study of the experiences of Black women academic researchers because literature demonstrates that women in the academy are still viewed as mothers or kitchen helpers; these perceptions have been mentally internalised by both boys and girls in their childhood.

The next section briefly discusses Africana womanism as the third theoretical framework that underpins this study. Africana womanism contends for strong African women who define themselves and their stance in society while they are also inclusive of men.

### **2.2.3 Africana womanism**

An investigation about women's issues cannot avoid theories about women. In this study, I distance myself from feminism, Black feminism and womanism. Hudson-Weems (in Irele, 1995:82) cautions women to adopt terminologies that were not coined

by themselves. As the proponent of Africana womanism, Nkumane (2001: 27) says the following about feminism:

*“I think to talk of the terminology, feminism, we have to deal with the inception of the term itself and what its original design was? Who designed it, and what were the needs of the women who designed it? It was created by White women...It was exclusionary. Black women were not accepted; they were not invited to be part of it. Therefore when I think of the strong Black women from Africa, from the diaspora, I never think of them as feminists, because I know what feminism means to me, I know it means “get back.”*

It is essential to know how and why particular women's movements came into being. Feminism was designed for and by White women to address their own problems. It was exclusionary of Black women and their needs. Since Black women were not invited to be part of it and were initially not accepted at its inception, the term Black feminism reminds one of this exclusion and rejection. Feminism in Hudson-Weems's argument means “get back.” For this reason, I do not align this study with feminism of any kind. Aldridge and Young (2000:205) in an article entitled *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies* cites Hudson-Weems who states, “women who are calling themselves Black feminists need another word that describes what their concerns are. Black Feminism is not a word that describes the plight of Black women.” Hudson-Weems (in Aldridge & Young, 2000:205) further unpacks the term feminism and says:

*“Because female empowerment, the very foundation upon which the agenda of feminist/Black feminist thought rests, is the number one priority, rather than race empowerment, our major concern since our involuntary migration from Africa to the United States in the early seventeenth century, most Africana women do not consider themselves feminists. Rather than Africana womanist family centredness, this female centredness of feminism, which informs the ordering of issues revolving around the centrality and*



*exclusivity of womanhood, poses some serious problems for the Africana woman. Betina Aptheker, a white feminist herself; even sees the feminist priority as unworkable for the Black woman.”*

Female empowerment is the foundation for feminism as contrasted with race empowerment for Africana womanism. Africana womanism is family centred, takes men into account and is not exclusionary of men. This research also does not associate itself with womanism, a term coined by Alice Walker. Walker (in Aldridge & Young, 2000:205) in her essay, *In search of Our Own Mothers’ Gardens*, described a womanist as:

*“A Black feminist or feminist of colour...who loves other women, sexually or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture ...[and who] sometimes loves individual men, sexually/and or nonsexually. Committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female...Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”*

The fact that a womanist may love another woman sexually makes it inappropriate for this study because the women participants in this study are heterosexual Black women academics. This study associates itself with strong Black women from Africa as a whole including South Africa. It aligns itself with the Africana womanism theory or methodology as propounded by Hudson-Weems in the late 1980s after realising that feminism and womanism failed to adequately take into account the heterogeneity of women of African descent with their different histories and realities. Hudson-Weems (in Pellerin, 2012:76) defines Africana womanism as an:

*“African-centred ideology created and designed for all women of African–descent. It is grounded in our culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women.”*

Africana womanism is grounded in African culture. It takes into consideration the unique African experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana womanism. Hudson-Weems again adds from her article entitled, *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies* (in Aldridge & Young, 2000) that Africana womanism is:

*“a theoretical concept designed for all women of African descent. Its primary goal...is to create their [Africana women’s] own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action. The first part of the coinage, Africana, identifies the ethnic background of the woman being considered, and this reference to her ethnicity, establishing her cultural identity, relates directly to her ancestry and land-base, Africa. The second part of the term, womanism, in addition to taking us back to the rich legacy of African womanhood...”*

The above explanation underlines that Africana womanism takes into account the issue of land-base which is Africa, African descent, ethnic background, African ancestry, cultural identity, self-assessment or self-naming and African womanhood. Pellerin (2012: 76) reiterates:

*“Africana womanism methodology is grounded in an African-centred approach to systematically investigate Africana women phenomenon. The objective is to establish an appropriate frame of reference attuned to the historical and contemporary realities of Africana women.”*

Africana womanism concerns itself with the investigation of Africana women problems as in this research. One can sum it up by stating that Africana womanism “embraces the concept of collectivism for the entire family in its overall liberation struggle for survival.” (Pellerin, 2012: 76-77). Pellerin further extends the explanation to state that the burden of the Africana woman “is not solely grounded in her gender but in her race first. As such, there is no separation between the Africana woman and her race

because her struggle is a communal struggle that must collectively be addressed within and by the community.”

#### **2.2.3.1 The applicability of Africana womanism to this study**

Africana womanism is a valuable theory for the investigation of the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The participants in this study were all of African descent. They have been disadvantaged by the Apartheid era and hence share a shared history of their struggle in South Africa. Howard-Hamilton (2003: 20) asserts “the Black woman in higher education faces greater risks and problems now than in the past.” It is imperative to learn about their academic journey in this present era and to be able to draw conclusions on whether the position of women in academia has improved based on empirical evidence.

The three theories gender schema, sociocultural theory and womanism were selected as appropriate theories for this investigation.

### **2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS ON LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS IN UNIVERSITIES**

Neuman (2000) in De Vos *et al.* (2005:1250) states that “a good literature review places a research project in context.” It indicates the path of prior research and how the current project is linked to the former. A literature review exposes the researcher to what has already been said on the topic. It also demonstrates how prevailing ideas fit into the researcher's own thesis and how the researcher's thesis agrees or differs from them.

This literature review aims to narrate the research stories of the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at various universities in Western and African countries.

### **2.3.1 Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in universities in Western countries**

This section reviews the literature on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers from the Western countries which include universities in the US and the UK. Experiences of Black women academic researchers from these Western countries will not only create awareness of the challenges faced by Black women academic researchers the world over but such information will highlight strategies that the Black women academics adopted to fast-track their academic development as well as their research skills in their respective universities. The choice of the Western countries was random and was made with the knowledge that the universities in these countries have Black women academics and that being the case, Black women academic researchers in these countries must have encountered challenges in terms of research which are the issues that are investigated in this study.

#### **2.3.1.1 Typically lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in universities in the United States**

##### **a) Black women (and men) in academic spaces that were not meant for them**

Tillman (2012:121) asserted that in the Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's) in the US, Black female students, faculty and administrators found themselves in a “chilly and unwelcoming environment” as described by Moses (1989) in her report on the education of women in the US. For many Black women and men, the environment was described as alienating. The environment showed no signs of improvement but continued to remind them that they worked in spaces that were not made for them as they were continuously viewed as outsiders who found little support for their academic endeavours.

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012) in the article entitled, *We need a woman, we need a Black woman: gender, race and identity taxation in the academy*, echo Moses' (1989) assertion and stress the “chilly and unwelcoming environment” raised by Tillman

(2012). Hirshfield and Joseph (2012:213) also highlight that the “once almost entirely dominated by men, academia had slowly become an environment that women have begun to access in larger numbers.” The scholars emphasised that although women were now in the majority in academia, they still found themselves unwelcomed, especially by male academics.

#### **b) The marginalisation of Black women academics**

Hinton (2009:394) in an article entitled, *Creating Community on the Margins: The Successful Black Female Academician*, referred to Collins (1986) gave an appropriate definition of the term marginalisation and highlighted that marginalisation in academia refers to the outside-within status occupied by Black women in work situations. Black women often work with people of different races, class and gender and in each of these social levels, they occupy the bottom level as outsiders within (Collins, 1986 in Hinton, 2009:395). The outsider-within status is when Black women find themselves in institutions where they are never recognised as part of the mainstream. They are perceived as outsiders that exist within. Hinton argues that those who perceive the situation from the outside-in experience a unique view of their own situation as well as of those who occupy the ‘centre’. This is also referred to as “power living” in academia (Hinton, 2009:395) The Black female faculty as the marginalised are able to realise the weaknesses and strengths of those who function in the centre. Living on the margins affords Black female faculty to see that the powerful occupy powerful positions not based on merit but only because they are privileged.

Tillman (2012:121) found that her contributions and acceptance in the academy as a Black female professor remained a case of tolerance rather than of recognition. She (2012:121) said:

*“It is interesting how students, colleagues, and staff sometimes interact with a grown Black woman who is a full professor- they sometimes conveniently forget that I am a faculty member and not a Maid, not one of the Helps.”*

The above extract indicates that Black female academics had to endure difficult circumstances in the academy in the US, especially in the PWIs no matter how highly qualified they were. Tillman hit it at the core when she said, “Some individuals still appear to be puzzled by me (my Blackness), my presence and my success.” She recounted that in order to improve her academic writing skills; she was told to learn how to write like a man. She had to endure all kinds of offensive comments and was also expected not get upset lest she is mistaken for an “angry Black woman.” Tillman (2012) did not only narrate her negative experience in the academy but she also shared strategies of survival for those that wished to join the academy. She advised that Black female scholars should understand the rules of the academy and negotiate the academic culture where they should “publish or perish.”

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 213) noticed that although women have begun to access the academy in large numbers now than ever before, female faculty tend to lag behind their male counterparts in terms of productivity, recognition and compensation. The leading cause cited for these problems were the extra responsibilities assigned to women professors which included advisory services and mentorship expectations. These responsibilities created obstacles among the faculty of colour and caused emotional and psychological distress.

### **c)        Mentoring as an essential need for the Black female faculty**

According to Tillman (2012:124), mentoring Black faculty in the PWIs is indispensable for their success. Tillman emphasised the building of a network of mentors in one’s field of specialisation as well as across disciplines. It was recommended that the building of a network of mentors should be built early in one’s career. Multiple mentors could assist in different ways. The networks could offer emotional, social support and guidance to Black female academics. She further encouraged Black women academics to be aggressive and shameless, to seek out opportunities to collaborate with scholars in their field and make presentations at conferences. Such actions would be purposeful and strategic and could help young Black women academic researchers achieve their goals.

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 215) echo the importance of networking in academia. They highlighted that like the faculty of colour, women in academia, and especially those in natural sciences, often lacked the complex networks that their White male peers enjoy. Women struggle to gain legitimacy and authority in their field. These scholars reiterated that female academics were involved in too much committee activities, which created problems for them in terms of promotion rates as compared to their male peers.

**d) Black women academics as mentors for female students**

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 218) state that although female professors never objected to serving on multiple committees, they appeared somewhat disturbed by the expectation of mentoring and advising female students. They stated that male professors neglected female students hence the burden of mentoring these students got shifted to female professors. Another added responsibility was supporting students from historically disadvantaged groups to which they themselves as Black female professors belonged. The Black women academics were then viewed as being 'experts' on minority groups. Academic women of colour felt that those responsibilities were overwhelming and they perceived them as an additional and uncomfortable responsibility.

**e) Black women academics as mother figures**

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 222) found that Black women academics were also perceived as mother figures in the academy. Women were expected to nurture or 'mommy' their students. Some faculty women did not perceive this in a positive light but viewed it as a burden. Some felt that the expectation of being a 'sympathetic' professor required more emotional support than the intellectual and critical inspiration that they wanted to provide. On the other hand, some female faculty members embraced "the gendered and racial norms that they believed allowed them the freedom to be nurturing to their students." Those who viewed the nurturing task in a positive note felt that it made them popular advisers in the academy. Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 223) further argue that the view of female faculty members as academic

mothers created stereotypes about African-American women. It created space in which students granted them less authority and respect as compared to the respect they granted their White and male peers. Female faculty members had an unnecessarily added responsibility to think of new strategies they could employ to achieve and maintain students' respect.

**e) Assimilation of Black female faculty by White faculty**

Hinton (2009:395) referred to Thomas and Hollenshead (2001) who identified a strange kind of marginalisation that he called assimilation. This kind of marginalisation occurred when the Black female faculty were “forced either covertly or overtly, to compromise their gender and or/racial/ethnic identities and conform to the expectations of their White colleagues. These expectations demanded the successful Black women academics to be shining examples in their groups and somehow act differently from other Blacks and other women.” According to Hinton (2009) the acceptance of this kind of academic culture required that the successful Black women assimilate perspectives that were different and contradictory to their beliefs. The assimilation further divided the Black women in the academy.

**f) Shifting**

Related to assimilation was the problem of shifting. Hinton (2009:397) referred to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003:150) who explained shifting as a phenomenon that took place when Black women “engaged in a grown-up game of pretend as they change their voices, attitudes, and postures to meet the cultural codes of workaday America as well as the broader societal codes of gender, race and class.” The aim of shifting was to show allegiance to Black male colleagues or White colleagues and to downplay their achievements so that they did not threaten others within their communities. The shifting process at work forced the Black women faculty to hide in order to survive. In order to be successful, Black women were expected to shift too far from their very selves and distance themselves from their own success. They were expected to fit in spaces and in images created for them by others (Hinton, 2009:397).



**g) Summary of the lived experiences of Black women academics in American universities**

The themes of marginalisation, Black women in academic spaces not meant for them, assimilation and shifting indicate that Black women academic researchers at American universities face racial challenges in unwelcoming, male-dominated environments. The challenges are dual: both racial and gender-based as Black male and White male academics make Black women academics feel that they are in spaces not intended for them (Hinton, 2012; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012). Further, marginalisation is perpetuated by assimilation of Black successful women academics into the White academic culture by acting as shining examples who should distance themselves from other Black women academics.

Black women academics are also expected to assume the mothering role for Black students. Survival strategies suggested for those who wish to join the academy are to build networks and obtain multiple mentors as opposed to one mentor to provide emotional and social support. Other advice is for Black women academics to adopt aggressive behaviour and join other academics in collaborative research and publication. Such actions are thought to be helpful in assisting young Black women academics in reaching their goals in the academy.

**2.3.1.2 Typically lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in universities in the United Kingdom**

**a) Misrecognition**

Maylor (2009) in an article: *Is it because I'm Black? A Black female research experience* shares her personal research experience as a Black woman researcher in the UK at data gathering sites and research conferences. Maylor (2009: 55) found that some White people did not understand or engage with Black researchers. In one of the schools she visited with a White female colleague on a research project, the latter was greeted with warmth and called by name by the school's deputy head teacher who welcomed them. She, on the other hand, was ignored even after she explained

to the deputy head teacher that she was the one who arranged for the interviews over the phone. The deputy head teacher ignored her and continued to explain to the White female colleague about the arrangements made for the day's research. To Maylor's amazement, her White colleague claimed not to have noticed anything odd about the behaviour of the deputy head teacher. At another school, Maylor jointly interviewed a White deputy head teacher together with another White female colleague. She asked most questions but the White deputy head teacher replied directly to and maintained eye contact with the White researcher throughout the interview. That was the second instance wherein the Black female researcher was rendered invisible.

## **b) Racism**

Maylor (2009:57) recounts another experience that occurred at her own university where she was introduced to a White academic visitor by her White colleague. The visitor asked if Maylor was one of the 'helpers'. When she challenged the visitor's remarks, her White colleagues turned a blind eye to the racism that she had experienced. Instead, her White colleagues wanted her to explain why she was upset with the visitor's remark. Maylor (2009: 57) states:

*"There was no sense of understanding about 'race' and racism and assumptions made about someone's ability on the basis of her/his skin colour, and the Historical devaluing of Black peoples' intelligence, abilities and skills."*

Maylor's account of her experiences confirms that Black women academic researchers experience being 'outsiders within' which continually reminds them that they are misfits. As stated earlier by Hinton (2009: 395) the outside-within status:

*"(This) occurs when Black women participate in institutions where they are not recognised as a part of the mainstream and they are treated as outsiders, hence, they are outsiders that exist within."*

Maylor's narrative also revealed that even her White colleagues were 'colour blind' and conveniently chose not to have noticed racism and its effect on their Black academic colleague.

### **c) Recognition**

Recognition of Black women academics, according to Maylor (2009), occurs for the wrong reasons. She was recognised as a security risk at an immigration control whenever she travelled with White colleagues to conferences. She was stopped, interrogated and had her luggage searched while her White colleagues would go through passport control without being questioned. The White colleagues would, in most cases, not even realise that she had not followed them through the airport exit. She recalled that on a trip returning from Latvia, she was instructed to take off her clothes in full view of other passengers while going through passport control. She (2009:59) states:

*"In fact, the Latvian security staff member only stopped asking me to undress when another staff member pointed out that the situation was becoming embarrassing. Embarrassing for whom I wonder? It is I as a Black person who is recognised and viewed as a security risk while my White colleagues are ignored."*

### **d) The existence of gender bias in the Ivory Tower**

Easterly and Ricard (2011:64) in an article: *Conscious Efforts to End Unconscious Bias: Why Women Leave Academic Research*, identified discrimination with regard to research funding and promotion to higher ranks for women researchers. They stated that while an increasing number of women receive doctorates, there is no increase in the number of women promoted to professor. Easterly and Ricard (ibid) refer to Valian (1998) who explained the relation of this form of discrimination to gender schema and that it consisted of "beliefs that were held by all people and limit understanding of what women, should, could, and can accomplish."

These scholars highlight that cases of unconscious bias and gender schemas in academia were plentiful. They point out that letters of recommendation for new jobs and promotion reveal gender bias. In the case of women referees, women academics are more likely to receive letters that contained weak praise and such letters include reference to personal life and recommend women for training and teaching. In contrast, men are more often recommended for their research, skills and abilities. Thomas (1996:143) states:

*“In gendered academy, the woman academic is the outsider whose contributions to the department are often invisible. The gendered culture of the university works at all levels to create barriers to women’s full participation.”*

Wright *et al.*, (2007:147) in an article: *Out of Place: Black women academics in British universities* refers to such type of discrimination as institutional racism. Institutional racism is defined as “a set of subtle ways in which racism is institutionalised; in particular, the way in which power appears to be naturalised in the body of the white male” (ibid).’ This process hinders the progress of the minority ethnic groups. According to the above article, institutional racism was perceived to involve indirect discrimination in the manner in which services were provided for members of minority groups, employment equity matters that were not ethnically inclusive and seniors being disproportionately White.

**e) Summary of the lived experiences of Black women academics in the universities in the United Kingdom**

The literature from the universities in the UK highlights themes of misrecognition or invisibility, racism, recognition and existence of gender bias in the academy. Black women academic researchers lamented misrecognition or invisibility at research sites. At research sites, White participants would respond to and only recognise White women academics and render the Black women academics invisible. This happened in the presence of their White colleagues who would later claim that they did not notice any odd behaviour. Misrecognition was not only from the research participants but was

also from the White colleagues who went to the research site together with the Black women academics. The Black woman academics had to contend with their colleagues' denial.

Black women academic researchers shared incidences of racism that occurred in their own institutions that belittled them as they were referred to as 'helpers' in front of their White colleagues who continued to turn a blind eye to the racism witnessed. This confirmed that Black women academics were outsiders who found themselves within institutions that were not created for them. Further misrecognition of Black women academics occurred at immigration to and from research conferences where Black women academics were stopped, searched and in some instances instructed to undress. These incidences went unnoticed by White colleagues (Maylor, 2009).

In the UK universities, gender bias was reported with regard to access to research funding and promotions in the academy. An increasing number of Black women academics received doctoral degrees but were not promoted to professor. Men were perceived to possess better research skills than women and were recommended for higher ranks while women remained at the bottom of the academic ranks.

### **2.3.2 Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in African universities**

The literature search takes into account African universities in the five sub-regions of Africa as identified by the UN in Wikipedia. The regions are Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa and Northern Africa. The choice of African universities in the different African Regions was influenced by the availability of relevant information for this research.

There was a scarcity of material from Central African universities, which included the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. I could not access enough information from Northern African universities in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Mauritania. African regions where information was available for this study were East and West Africa and Southern Africa.

### **2.3.2.1 Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in Eastern African universities**

In the East Africa Region information was available from the University of Zimbabwe.

#### **a) Zimbabwe**

##### **i) Racial alienation coupled with the masculine alienation of women**

Dorsey (1989:344), a precursor writer on the situation of academic women at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) in a work titled: *Academic Women at the University of Zimbabwe: Career prospects, aspirations and family role constraints*, highlighted that the University of Zimbabwe faced two significant challenges after independence in 1980: racial and gender imbalance concerning the composition of its academic staff at UZ.

Structural barriers at UZ prevented women from climbing the academic ladder because male academics excluded them from male networks wherein ideas were exchanged formally. Formal sharing of ideas and experiences is essential for academic development in one's discipline. Participating in such networks opens up possibilities of collaboration among colleagues. Women were disadvantaged by the exclusion and that indicated that women had less power than male academics. They could not influence research and powerful conversations at the university (Dorsey, 1989:360).

Gaidzanwa (2007:63) in his article: *Alienation, Gender and Institutional Culture at the University of Zimbabwe*, concurred with Dorsey (1989) that the UZ had a White-dominated institutional history characterised by a dominant racist culture that was exclusionary of Blacks and the gender culture of the university tended to be White and masculinist. The University of Zimbabwe went through various name changing processes. First, it was called the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (UCRN), the University of Rhodesia (UR) and finally the University of Zimbabwe. The UCRN was initially intended to be a Whites-only institution but it became a non-racial

institution because of the intervention of the colonial government which funded most of its buildings and resources. Those were buildings such as the residences, the administration and the library. The masculinist institutional culture that was exacerbated by the war co-existed with the more liberal masculine counter-culture, which was noticeable in covert support of the liberal movements and a liberal curriculum in the arts, social sciences and education. Black students and academic staff remained a racially subordinated and culturally alienated group and their gender and class were suppressed or subdued (Gaidzanwa, 2007:63).

**ii) Black academic women as ‘tea girls’**

Gaidzanwa (2007:63) scrutinised the gendered aspects of academic work at the UZ. He explored the experiences of academics, their adaptation and alienation in two sites: the Senior Common Room and the Social Science Tearoom. He discovered that those spaces served as sites for intellectual production, reproduction and contestation among academics. He revealed that for the young Black academic women, events in the Social Science Tearoom meant organising and running the tea club and ensuring the availability of supplies and the collection of subscriptions. He observed that the tea room served as an arena for academic interaction where some junior women built alliances with older males who knew the system. The experienced academics consciously undertook to offer career guidance and counselling to students in the tea room, to make the alienating environment bearable (Gaidzanwa, 2007:75). Gaidzanwa further highlighted that women at UZ undertook the role of tea girl voluntarily as part of domesticating and reducing alienation in the workplace. The tearoom interactions as time went on, enabled the junior academics to build academic and social sodalities within the alienating environment. Gaidzanwa’s (2007:76) highlighted that by 2007, junior academic women were referred to journals where they could submit their articles for publication. The tearoom culture provided a space for amicable co-existence among the UZ academic staff. The serving role of the women in the tea club was consistent with the expected gender roles of the women in society

### **iii) The mothering of students**

Black women academics at UZ took on a multitude of social tasks which lessened their time to engage in research and publication. Additional tasks included the “mothering of students” that contributed to overwork and burn out most of the time. They performed unpaid and unskilled work such as serving tea, meritoriously carrying over their domestic roles into the academic sphere and losing out on conducting research beneficial for their own promotion. Gaidzanwa (2007:75) referred to that as “transference of maternalism” into the workplace that costs women highly. He further highlighted that in an Affirmative Action Project workshop in 2000, junior women academics complained about exhaustion and helplessness associated with dealing with young students.

### **iv) Exclusion of women from collaborative networks**

Women academics could not participate in cooperative or collaborative work; all the credit went to the dominant seniors who were well positioned through networks for finding funds and publishing outlets. The small number of tenured female academics and the existence of a sex-segregated nature of the society at UZ made it difficult for many junior women to be mentored. Some faculties had very few women or no women at all.

### **v) The concentration of academic women in lower academic ranks**

Dorsey (1989:344) states that although an active staff development managed to address the racial imbalance at UZ, gender imbalance remained a challenge. Women who formed 21% of the academic staff at the time continued to be clustered in the lower and middle ranks in all faculties. Dorsey reiterated that at UZ even women with a doctorate degree were less likely than men to be promoted to higher academic ranks of senior lecturer, associate professor and professor.

A larger proportion of men at UZ were appointed at the rank of senior lecturer while women were likely to begin their academic careers in temporary posts. Thus, men



were more likely than women to move to a higher academic rank; women had to first move out of the temporary posts and hence the vast majority of women were and remained in the lecturer rank. Dorsey (1989:356) explained that in her time, “it was still rare for a woman to be appointed to either associate or professor.” She further reiterated that men with doctorates were three times more likely to be associate or full professor. Academic women at UZ published less than their male counterparts. Most women tended to be high achievers in the teaching area and in working with students rather than research. She further highlighted that even women whose productivity was equal to that of men were not rewarded equally. Women’s work was not valued to be as high as that of men.

#### **vi) Recruitment of academic women**

Dorsey (1989:347) observed that, although the majority of men and women got employed through responding to a vacancy advertisement, at UZ the personal contact or mentors led to the recruitment of young women as academics who were often viewed as sheepish, meek, and less confident about their ability than men. The idea was to recruit women who would need encouragement from a respected lecturer or professor to help them in the academic careers. The idea presented here suggests that senior academics enjoyed leading young academic women who would be dependent on them for a longer period than men.

#### **v) Participation of women in university governance**

Dorsey (1989:351) established that chances of women’s appointment to positions of university governance were zero. Women instead were largely appointed in positions that had low power, were less prestigious and demanded a great deal of burdensome work. Due to this situation, women’s participation in university governance was low and male academics largely formed the decision-making committees.

**vi) Summary on the lived experiences of Black women academics in East African universities**

Themes of racial segregation, women as tea girls, exclusion of women from collaborative networks and clustering in lower academic ranks emerged from the literature on the University of Zimbabwe. Racial and gender imbalances affected Black women academics a great deal. Women were excluded from male networks and could not share their academic ideas. UZ was characterised as a masculinist institution only enjoyed by both White and Black male academics. Black women remained racially subordinated to White academic males and were also culturally alienated by their Black male academics. Although the racial imbalances improved with time, gender imbalances remained a problem. Dorsey (1989) pointed out that even women with doctorate degrees remained at the lower ranks and could not be promoted to senior or professorship ranks. Men moved faster in academic ranks than women. Women did not play an important role in the governance of UZ as they were not in the decision-making committees of the university. At UZ, young women were customarily recruited and were viewed as less experienced and confident so that they would remain dependent on the senior male academics for a longer period. Black women academics at UZ had to adopt a submissive role regardless of the fact that an academic institution was not a home. The domestic stereotypes of women as tea makers and mothers were transferred to the academy.

**2.3.2.2 Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in West African universities**

West African countries include countries such as Ghana, Nigerian, and Senegal. Information was available on Ghanaian and Nigerian universities.

**a)       Ghanian Universities**

**i)       Inadequate academic support for women researchers**

There was general agreement among researchers that Black women academic researchers at the Cape Coast University in Ghana, also known as Lagon were faced with the lack of support for academic development even from the top management. Prah (2002: 29) attests to the subtle form of gender discrimination that overlooked women academics in terms of opportunities for grants, scholarships and fellowships for further training. Women were not given adequate academic support like their male counterparts. As such, they could not travel outside the university to conduct research which enabled academics to gain access to laboratories and hence provide them with opportunities to produce articles that are crucial for their promotion. Women were bypassed by the Vice Chancellor each time such opportunities became available. They always had to make their own arrangements for travelling.

Tsikana (2007: 29) added that the recent changes at Lagon that placed a strong emphasis on terminal degrees further pushed academic women to the periphery. According to the Wikipedia Free encyclopaedia, a terminal degree is the highest academic degree in a given field of study. The emphasis on terminal degrees had negative implications for female academics who often embarked on terminal degrees in mid-career because of child-rearing. Many academics obtained terminal degrees by studying abroad and this further limited those who lacked the opportunity to travel and establish study relationships with intellectuals in universities abroad. The fact that academics had to travel abroad for their academic development, indicated a lack of resources at Lagon.

**ii)       Scarcity of resources**

Prah (2002:29) points out that male academic researchers had to travel to universities abroad in order to gain access to better research facilities. That enabled them to produce research articles. Tsikana (2007: 30) concurs with Prah (2002) that “the establishment of links with intellectuals and institutions abroad was key to research

prospects and external review of articles for promotion.” The need to travel abroad was a major setback for women because fewer women studied abroad.

### **iii) The place of a woman is in the kitchen**

The situation, as described above, indicates how male academics receive preferential treatment as opposed to women academics at Lagon University. Prah (2002:34) reveals that women complained about the attitudes of their male counterparts who viewed them as “wives” who were appendices to their husbands, who at 4:30 must leave the office to cook for their husbands. He recalled a male academic who was overheard saying, “There was no need for more women in the system, after all, there were already a lot of them.” Some senior male colleagues tended to demand traditional codes of respect and expected women academics to show more respect towards them. Women were also continually scrutinised as to whom they talked to and with whom or how they spent their leisure time.

Tanye (2008:169) explained that many people in Ghana were of the opinion that educated women wanted to equate with men; hence if they were denied the chance to education, so much the better. He further stated that the Ghanaian society viewed highly qualified Ghanaian women as not marriageable because it was assumed that they would not make good wives or cook well. Furthermore, the society believed that being highly educated endangered women’s moral lives. Tanye (ibid) adds that it is a general notion in West Africa and Ghana in particular, that the woman’s place is in the kitchen. These traditional beliefs manifested themselves at universities and hence women in Ghana were not free to embark on careers or in any socio-economic venture outside the home.

### **iv) Ghanaian university as a male-dominated space**

Tsikana (2007: 30) argues antecedents and early practice at University of Ghana marked it as a powerful male space that aimed at creating modern African masculinities. A large number of departments had no women and faculty was still largely male-dominated even in the subjects that attracted female students. There was

no female member of the faculty in Physics until the 1990s. Most women at the University of Ghana belonged to the third generation of academics trained in the 1980s following a period of military coups, political and economic crisis; most of them were trained in Ghana. The third generation academics did not have terminal degrees as compared to the first generation faculty who were trained before the 1960s. They were considered able to hold on their own anywhere in the world. The first generation faculty contributed to Lagon's reputation compared to the third generation faculty whose publishing record was not ideal. Most women belonged to this third generation faculty. Tsikana (2007) further highlighted that "in all about 79% of staff were men, while 20.3% of the faculty were women. Only about 5% of all women academics were professors as compared to 10% of men." Women were concentrated in the lower ranks.

#### **v) Coping with multiple roles**

In many societies, women played many roles. In addition to being academic researchers, Black women academic researchers had to be loving wives to their husbands, caring and nurturing mothers to their children. Acker (1994) in Prah (2000) argues that two "greedy" institutions, the home and the family, were problematic for women. Academic women had to bear and take care of children at the same time as they were expected to produce good research articles. It was not possible to separate the two responsibilities. Acker (1994) in Prah (2002:34-35) highlights that the main issue for women is the timing of family and career cycles. If it were possible it would be easier to concentrate on one type of cycle and leave the other until later. Women have to juggle the career while rearing children and those tasks seldom carry alternatives.

Tsikana (2007: 30) adds that female academics often embark on terminal degrees in the middle of their careers. He highlights also that universities in many instances are gender blind concerning women's absence in the highest ranks of academia. Academic women's roles as mothers demand a high price and prevent them from moving as fast as men do in terms of promotion.

#### **vi) The problem of heavy teaching load**

According to Tsikana (2007:30) women at Lagon were overwhelmed by problems of institutional culture and heavy loads of teaching. The main problem was the lack of opportunities for research collaboration abroad. The women who belonged to the third generation faculty, whose employment in the 1980s coincided with the mass exit of Ghanaian academics to Nigeria, were faced with severe national crisis and intellectual production that made their careers almost impossible. They could only realise promotions in their fifties. The national situation in the 1980s was not conducive to publishing articles for many years.

#### **vii) Black women academics as academic mothers**

Tsikana (2007: 31) comments that the career development for women includes viewing women academics as mothers who should expect students to seek them out more than their other colleagues. Further, he reveals that everyday life for women academics at Lagon campus raised questions about the place of female faculty. There was perception that the real academics were male because they were given more challenging and higher profile jobs. Women were continuously expected to carry out domestic and ceremonial roles at work and all those who did not conform to those norms were subjected to ridicule and disapproval. Tsikana (2007:36) states, "Female faculty were routinely called "Auntie" and "Mama" while male academics were addressed by titles signifying their academic achievements."

That practice perpetuated and reinforced the maternal and wife roles expected of women.

#### **viii) Sexual harassment of women academics**

Tsikana (2007:36) found that women at the University of Ghana suffered some form of patronisation that made resistance difficult on their part. Specific approaches by male academics towards women academics had sexual undertones but the nature of the jokes and the seniority of the men involved made it difficult to judge when the line

had been crossed. Women academics felt that married women academics were more protected because they belong to other men.

**ix) Summary of the lived experiences of Black women academics in the Ghanaian universities**

Themes identified from the data on Ghana are inadequate to support women researchers, the place of a woman is in the kitchen, coping with multiple roles, the problem of heavy teaching load, Black academic women as academic mothers and sexual harassment of women academics.

Literature indicated a lack of support for academic development for women even from top management at Lagon University. Compared to men, women academics were overlooked in terms of opportunities for scholarship and fellowships for further training. Prah (2002) found that even the Vice-Chancellor bypassed women applicants and they had to make their own arrangements for travelling for research. Women were, therefore, excluded from developments that would lead to their promotions since university staff obtained their terminal degrees by enrolling in universities abroad.

The Ghanaian society perceived educated women as wanting to equate themselves with men and that being highly educated endangered women's moral lives. In some instances, academic women were routinely called "auntie" or "mama" with the intention to ridicule them.

Literature also revealed that married women were protected from the sexual undertones made to single women by senior male academics. Women had to endure this type of behaviour as they had to respect men in the academy in the same way they respected their husbands. In Ghana, women had no help towards their academic development. They were pushed to the margins because chances for promotion to higher academic ranks were closed to them.

**b) Nigeria**

**i) Lack of adequate qualifications**

Yusuf (2014:282-283) undertook research described in an article titled, *Gender and Career Advancement in Academia in Developing Countries: Notes on Nigeria*. The results reported that at Lagos State University there were sufficient opportunities for both male and female academics to advance academically. However, few women occupied leadership and management positions because there were not many women at this institution. Another reason cited for the absence of Black women in high positions was that women academics lacked the required qualifications for advancement into higher ranks in the academy. Acquiring the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, which was a requirement for career advancement, was seen as a phenomenal task. The commendable aspect about women at Lagos State University was that women academics were reported to play an equal role to men in ensuring academic development.

**ii) Women's multiple roles as an impediment to Black women academic advancement**

Yusuf (2014:284) found that Black women academics were not in possession of PhDs. Reasons ranged from the fact that they had multiple roles to play: working women, mothers, wives and also had to fulfil other social commitments in life. Those activities left them with little time to engage in research activities. Spending too much time in academic research was a time-consuming activity that was viewed as contradictory to their loyalty to their children.

**iii) Overburdened with a teaching load**

Yusuf (2014: 285) states that Lagos State University academic staff were expected to carry out the three critical academic activities: teaching, research and counselling. Some women lamented being overburdened with teaching activities that increased stress. Spending too much time on teaching activities did not offer better opportunities



for women academics since teaching alone did not lead to promotion. Yusuf (ibid) points out the importance of research activities ought to be disseminated at conferences and consequently published in recognised journals in order to achieve promotion and advancement.

#### **iv) The absence of female mentors**

According to Yusuf (2014: 286), at Lagos State University successful female professors who could act as role models for the upcoming women academics were strikingly absent. Experienced professors left upcoming women lecturers to find their own way without academic assistance. Another hindrance for Black women academics to advance their academic qualifications was the lack of financial support. Women had to look for their own financial sponsors who were difficult to find.

#### **v) Importance of academic networking**

Yusuf (2014) found that women academics shied away from networking with other colleagues in the academy. Women viewed too much networking as a deviant behaviour; functioning as a successful wife and mother were viewed as the most important achievement. Yusuf (2014:286) states:

*“Success for women in developing countries is measured by the ability of the woman to keep her matrimonial home, while other success achieved by women is regarded as secondary. “”*

Women in African communities have the responsibility for domestic chores, childrearing and attention to husbands and those responsibilities restrict academic careers.

**vi) Summary of the lived experiences of Black women academics in Nigerian universities**

The literature on Black women academics at Nigerian universities indicated similarity with women academics at Lagos State University. They faced the challenges of a heavy workload and multiple roles which restricted their careers.

**2.3.2.3 Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in South African universities**

This discussion focuses on research into experiences of Black women academic researchers in South African universities.

**i) Discriminatory working conditions in the academic workplace**

In an article: *Reflections of Black Women Faculty in South African Universities*, Mabokela (2002:192) shares the findings of an inquiry into the experiences of ten Black women scholars at the Lecturer or Lecturer A academic rank in diverse academic institutions: two historically Black universities, a historically White university and a Technikon. Seashore University (pseudonym) was established to serve English-speaking white South Africans; Coastline University (pseudonym) was a historically Black university that produced graduates ready to enter the workforce after completing their degrees; Rural University (pseudonym) was a previous homeland institution, established to serve separate racial and ethnic groups during apartheid to maintain government structures of the homelands and to reproduce the subordinate economic, political and social status of Blacks. Lastly, City Technikon (pseudonym) was a historically Black institution established to provide vocational training for the workplace. Mabokela (2002:191) wrote her article at the time when South African universities were undergoing a transformation: to “become institutions that were responsive to and inclusive of historically marginalised groups-primarily Blacks and women.” Transformation raised the issue of the maintenance of high academic standards. There were perceptions that widening access to historically excluded groups would compromise standards at the PWIs. Mabokela (2002) argued that the

debate concerning the lowering of academic standards was raised by those who benefitted from the past discriminatory practices which would not want to lose their positions of privilege.

**ii) Implementation of new academic criteria that impeded academic mobility for Black faculty**

According to Mabokela (2002), the debate about academic standards resulted in the implementation of new criteria for promotion at universities and technikons. The new requirements demanded academics to be in possession of a PhD or equivalent terminal degree for promotion to senior lecturer rank. At the time, a majority of White and Indian males held senior academic ranks such as associate and full professor; Africans and women occupied junior lecturer and lecturer positions. Most African academics had an Honours degrees (Mabokela, 2002:191). The new criteria for promotion to a senior lecturer position were perceived negatively as it would disadvantage most Africans, many of whom were working towards their Master's or PhD. Black women could not apply for promotion based on the new criteria. Mabokela (2002:193) indicated:

*“Disturbingly, these new requirements apparently apply only to recent entrants in the academy. A significant proportion of senior scholars-professors, associate professors, and senior lecturers-do not meet these new academic standards yet they enforce them on their junior colleagues without consideration of the disparities in higher education created by the past practices of discrimination.”*

Basset (1993) as quoted by Mabokela (2002) labelled that process as a “career trap”, which restricted minority women who had to deal with new rules instead of engaging in activities that would result in career advancement. Schulze (2013) conducted a research project that involved Unisa staff and in her article: *Identities of Academics Lacking Doctoral Degrees: A Narrative Inquiry*. She re-emphasised the importance of possession of a doctoral degree for academics. She (2013:33) states:

*“Doctoral work is a long and challenging rite of passage that aims to transform students into scholars and provide them with the skills and qualities necessary for successful and productive participation in academic communities.”*

The above quotation indicates the importance of a doctoral degree for academic staff who are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the body of knowledge in the various disciplines. Schulze (2013:33) further states, “Obtaining doctoral degrees and being socialised into academic communities is, therefore, invaluable to academic employees.”

Another new requirement for promotion is the emphasis on research and publications. The historically Black universities as pointed out above had been established as teaching institutions under the apartheid policies. They had no capacity for research. Mabokela (2002: 193) states:

*“Given this history, many of the women in this study were not exposed to a culture of research as students and did not have to pursue research as a condition of employment until recently. Therefore, some still view research as a mysterious process that induces great anxiety. As lecturers, many of the women have limited exposure to and involvement in research activities; therefore, it is an even bigger challenge for them to supervise students.”*

Thus, Black academic women were unable to participate in research activities and therefore would not be in a position to disseminate research findings, publish or engage in conference presentations. Less participation in research implied that their level of research output was very low. Schulze (2013:33) maintains:

*“A defining academic community provides the language in which academics understand themselves and with which they*

*communicate with other members in person or through published work.”*

This underlines the requirements for scholarship in the academy: a doctoral degree and research publications. These two requirements are the rights of passage for being an “insider” and not an “outsider” in the academy. Black women academic researchers are required to overcome these challenges to secure a respectable space in the academic community.

### **iii) Lack of research support from senior colleagues**

Mabokela’s (2002:194) participants at Rural University complained about the lack of support and guidance from senior colleagues about the preparation of proposals, articles and manuscripts for publication. They shared concerns that senior colleagues with more research experience were unwilling to assist or share their knowledge. At Coastline University conditions were similar. White and Indian males were the only staff considered for promotion. At City Technikon, Indian staff members had fears about Africanization and how it could negatively impact the institution. This fear was driven by the perception that African scholars were poorly qualified.

Mokhele (2013:618) emphasised the importance of communities of practice that could provide support to emerging researchers. A participant in her research shared that she made alliances with women of other races to build networks. As a member of the Transformation Forum, this participant met other Black scholars with whom she could exchange notes in support of one another. This enabled her to rise to professorship in her institution.

### **iv) Heavier teaching load**

Mabokela (2002:192) found that women academics had heavier teaching loads than their male counterparts. At Rural University, the junior faculty had a double teaching schedule each day: three classes of full-time students and a class of part-timers. The heavy workload prevented women academics from taking study leave. Mabokela

further highlighted that the prohibition of Black academic women from study leave when it was critical for them to further their studies perpetuated their marginal position within the academy. Similarly, Schulze (2013: 39) found that all participants in her study spoke about the strain of the dual role, that of student and lecturer, which impacted on their time to engage in research.

**v) Black women academics as contract workers**

At Coastline University Black women academics were employed as contract workers for several years and could not accumulate the required number of employment days to qualify for study leave. Black women academics had to find alternative ways to pursue their studies (Mabokela, 2002).

**vi) Traditional culture as an impediment to Black women's academic mobility**

Mabokela's (2002:198) study identified three ways in which traditional culture impacted on Black women's academic development: culture in terms of norms and values that influence male and female relationships; the culture of male-dominated organisational practice and policies; and lastly, cultural influences across racial and ethnic groups in the higher education institutions. The study highlighted that women in these institutions were treated as if they could not think for themselves although they had to do all the hard work. Women raised concerns about the manner in which they were still expected to be submissive; hence they were portrayed as inferior and incompetent. Women had to work harder than their male counterparts to prove themselves. Black academic women acting as Heads of Departments faced more difficult situations as male colleagues showed them little respect. Male colleagues were reported to have challenged the authority and expertise of women Heads of Departments and course coordinators.

In another article: *Academic Identities: women on a South African landscape*, Walker (2006: 342) shared narratives of 13 academic women. Walker observed that dominant gender attitudes in society 'leaked' into women's academic careers. Her participants

struggled against the attitudes held by their male colleagues, other women and their partners concerning their academic advancements.

**vii) Summary of the lived experiences of Black women academics in South African universities**

Findings in the literature about South African universities did not differ from those found in the literature of other African countries. Discrimination in the workplace, heavy teaching load, criteria that impeded academic advancement, lack of support from senior colleagues, women as contract workers and the impact of traditional culture impeded the academic achievement of women.

## **2.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented three theoretical frameworks: GST, sociocultural theory and Africana womanism theory that underpinned this study. The connectivity of the theoretical frameworks with the study was highlighted and discussed.

A literature review discussed the experiences of Black women academics in universities in the US and the UK and universities located in East Africa, West Africa and South Africa. The themes that emerged from the literature on Western universities did not differ much from those on African universities. The following themes emerged: Black women in academic spaces that were not meant for them, marginalisation of Black academics, lack of mentors, academic women as academic 'mothers', heavy teaching load, Black academic women located at the bottom of the academic ranks, inadequate support, coping with multiple roles and importantly traditional culture as an impediment to the career advancement of women.

Chapter 3 presents the research approach and methodology: narrative and story in research.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY: NARRATIVE AND STORY IN RESEARCH**

*“Story ... is an ancient and altogether human method. The human being alone among the creatures on earth is a storytelling animal: sees the present rising out of the past, heading into a future; perceives reality in narrative form. (Novak, 1975 in Connelly & Clandinin” 1989:3).*

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 gave a detailed discussion of the literature review of the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers in Western as well as in African universities. This chapter focuses on the research approach and methodology. Data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, digital recordings and field notes are also explained. This chapter concludes by indicating how trustworthiness and ethical requirements were met.

#### **3.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

This research was motivated by my long-time interest in research about women’s issues as well as the findings of the Unisa WIR Audit Survey of 2008, as commissioned by Unisa Research Directorate. The Audit which was conducted by Unisa’s Bureau of Market Research (BMR) reported that the majority of participants in that audit survey were White women (Tustin & Moshoeu, 2008: viii). The audit omitted any mention of Black women academic researchers. This raised the question: what factors caused the non-participation of Black women academic researchers in the Audit?

The primary objective of the Unisa WIR audit was to conduct a study to establish the position, levels of skills and expertise, and needs of women researchers at Unisa. The study’s other objectives were:



- to generate a profile of women researchers
- to establish their specific research potential and needs
- to develop strategies that could facilitate increased numbers of women in research activities and
- to evoke interest among women to participate in own or team research.

The WIR project in South Africa is part of the NRF sub-programme of the Thuthuka Programme. The WIR originated in 1996 within the Research Capacity Development (RCD) directorate of the then Centre for Science Development (CSD). By 1997 the CSD had concluded its first research among women in various institutions and its research only considered women in the social sciences and humanity fields (Tustin & Moshoeu, 2008: vii). As a sub-programme of the Thuthuka Programme, the WIR aimed:

- To support women, especially Black women, to develop and strengthen their research skills,
- To increase the number of women in postgraduate studies, academia, research and leadership positions in South African tertiary institutions.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 20) state that within each significant research category, be it the quantitative, qualitative, mixed method and analytic research approach, there are types of research that are called research designs. In qualitative research approach, there are four research designs: ethnographic, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory and critical studies. This study was phenomenological in nature because it explored and described the meanings of a lived experience (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 24). In this study, I engaged in interviews with Black women academic researchers of CEDU at Unisa to gather data on the meanings, feelings and thoughts that they held about their lived experiences in the academy. Hamill (2010:17) states that in phenomenological research, researchers suspend their knowledge temporarily 'by bracketing' it; hence they do not influence the participants' understanding of the phenomenon. In this study, participants were given the

opportunity to share their lived experiences as researchers without interruption to allow for free flow of information.

### **3.3.1 Research paradigm**

According to Dobson (2002), a paradigm as the researcher's theoretical lens plays a vital role because it is the underlying belief system of the researcher (ontological assumptions) that mainly influences the choice of the methodology. As a researcher, I believe that there are multiple realities of the lived experiences of different Black women academic researchers at Unisa. Different participants cannot have a single meaning of a particular experience. Williamson (2006:3) explains that in the broader context of research theory in social sciences, there were two philosophical traditions, the positivist and interpretivist.

I believe in an interpretive paradigm and I feel that this paradigm was suitable for understanding the situations of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The rationale for selecting the interpretive paradigm was because of its principle that people are regularly involved in interpreting their ever-changing world. Interpretivists hold the opinion that the social world is constructed by people and is therefore different from the world of nature. Interpretivists favour a naturalistic inquiry, where fieldwork usually takes place in a natural setting and they embrace an inclusive style of reasoning and emphasise qualitative data (Williamson, 2006:84). During in-depth interviews, the participants individually shared their unique lived experiences as Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The participants had an opportunity to construct the realities of their academic world of work and to explain their realities to me at their own pace and in spaces chosen by themselves.

### **3.3.2 The qualitative research approach**

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 321) outline the nine critical characteristics of the qualitative research approach: natural settings, context sensitivity, direct data collection, rich narrative descriptions, process orientation, inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, emergent design and complex understanding and

explanation. They, however, emphasise that not all of these characteristics may be present in a qualitative study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:4) highlight the link between the interpretive paradigm and qualitative research by acknowledging that qualitative research is a situated activity that consists of a set of interpretive material practices that make the world visible or multi-layered in nature. They further explain that these practices turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos of the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that in a qualitative research study, things are studied in their natural settings. The interviews on the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa were conducted in the naturalistic world. That is, the workplace of the participants. I attempted to understand the participants in terms of their own definitions of their world (Babbie & Mouton, 2007:271).

Krauss (2005:760) attests that qualitative researchers do not assume a single unitary reality since each of us experiences any phenomenon from a different point of view, thus a different reality. As such, the phenomenon of “multiple realities” exists. As a researcher, I understood that I would interview different individuals hence I expected to get different experiences or different realities (cf. Chapter 4). I concur with Kraus (2005) as he observed that one major point most qualitative researchers put forward is “taking the point of view of the other”. Qualitative approach afforded me an opportunity to interact with the participants in their natural setting and by so doing I gained entry into their life world. The qualitative approach enabled me to gain an “insider perspective” into the lived research experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa.

### **3.3.3 Research type: Narrative inquiry**

Research methodology is an essential element of any research work. Silverman (2000:88) referring to methodology said, “This technique helps the researcher to acquire data to address the main questions and aims of the study. Therefore, the

method should reflect an overall research strategy.” I have chosen the narrative inquiry method to elicit rich data from the participants. Connelly and Clandinin (1990:2) highlight the relevance of narrative inquiry in studies that investigate people’s experiences as follows:

*“Narrative inquiry is increasingly used in studies of the educational experience. It has a long intellectual history both in and out of education. The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives.”*

Narratives contain storied lives of human beings and that storytelling results in narratives. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2) maintain “It is equally correct to say “inquiry into the narrative” as it is “narrative inquiry.” Enquiring into the narrative was enquiring into the story. The scholars further call the phenomenon a “story” and the inquiry a “narrative.” The narrative inquiry research method was chosen because it promoted my interaction with the participants and afforded them an opportunity to narrate their experiences from their own point of view.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000:20) in Giovannoli (2004:5) further emphasise that narrative inquiry is a way of understanding as follows:

*“It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experience that make up people’s lives, both individual and social. Simply stated... narrative inquiry is stories lived and told.”*

Narrative inquiry takes place between two people of whom one is an inquirer, who wants to know and the other one is the narrator of a story. The story that is narrated is renewed or re-lived because it is a story of an experience that occurred in a person’s

life. Narrative inquiry requires a partnership type of a process between the researcher and the participants. The research report presented in Chapter 4 is thus perceived as a collaborative document constructed by the researcher and the participants.

### **3.3.3.1 What do narrative inquirers do?**

Clandinin (2006:47) states that narrative inquirers study experience. Narrative inquirers could begin their inquiries either with engaging with participants through telling stories or coming alongside participants in the living out of stories. He states that when inquirers begin with telling stories or living stories, they entered into the midst of stories. Participants' stories, inquirers' stories, social, cultural and institutional stories, are all ongoing as narrative inquiries begin. Being in the field, where the researcher engages with participants, is 'walking' into the midst of stories. Entering into narrative inquiry relationships is the beginning of ongoing negotiations that are part of engaging in a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquirers conduct narrative studies of human experience. The end product of this research is the narratives of lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa.

### **3.3.3.2 What is a narrative?**

It is important from the onset to have a working definition of what a narrative is. Lieblich, (1998) in Giovannoli (2004:3) highlights that "while the terms *narrative* and *narrative research* often appear in qualitative studies, it is rare to find these terms defined." Giovannoli (2004:3) offers various definitions. Some definitions of a narrative are confined to the general linguistic features of a narrative such as the one proposed by Polkinghorne (1988) and Sarbin (1986) which placed emphasis on the organisational structural aspect of a narrative. Definitions of Western thinkers adopted the definition by Aristotle that placed more emphasis on the chronological order; a narrative has a beginning, middle and an end.

The focus in this study was on narratives that emerged from interviews and in conversations and these were not confined to any chronological order. Giovannoli (2004:4), like Riessman (1987), distinguishes several genres in interviews that do not

follow the expected (Aristotelian) form of the protagonist, inciting conditions, and culminating events. Among these, she includes habitual narratives (events happen over and over, and consequently, there is no peak in motion); hypothetical narratives (which depict events that did not happen); and topic-centred narratives (snapshots of past events that are linked thematically). The topic-centred narrative is appropriate for this study. It consists of snapshots of past events that are linked thematically. A more appropriate definition of a narrative is offered by Barrett and Stauffer (2009:7) who view the narrative as, “story” as a ‘mode of knowing’ and constructing meaning, and more recently, as a method of inquiry.” These authors further explain that perhaps the most enduring description and understanding of narrative is as a ‘story’, an account to self and others of people, places, and events and the relationship that holds between these elements. They state that it is through narratives, both “grand” and “master” and personal, that we have understood and communicated our knowledge and interpretations of our past and or present worlds and are able to speculate about our future. Through the use of narrative inquiry, the Black women academic researchers narrated their lived academic research experiences at Unisa.

### **3.3.3.3 The relevance of the narrative inquiry research method for this study**

The choice for the narrative inquiry stems from my many years of teaching oral literature or folklore in African Languages. Oral literature mainly focuses on prose narratives and traditional poetry. I chose to use the narrative inquiry because it afforded me an opportunity to collect data through conversations. Barrett and Stauffer (2009:7) concur that the roots of narrative go long and deep into the inquiry landscape. Its lineage might be traced through the varied disciples of anthropology, the arts, historical, literary, and cultural studies; psychology, sociology, and more recently educational inquiry. Babbie and Bastian (1999:2) also mentions that traditionally Africans have paid respect to good stories and storytellers, as have most past and present peoples around the world, who were rooted in oral cultures and traditions. Ancient writing traditions exist on the African continent, but most Africans today, as in the past, are primarily oral peoples, and their art forms are oral rather than literary (Babbie & Bastian, 1999).

In South Africa, storytelling or narration is a technique that is used by people to relive their emotions and experiences. The amnesty programme at the beginning of the post-apartheid era, after the first democratic election in 1994, was characterised by “truth-telling.” It played a pivotal role by rendering the action of truth-telling, wherein both the offenders and those offended narrated their stories to expose the atrocities that occurred in South Africa in order to deal with the mass racial and violation of human rights during the apartheid era. “Telling the truth” became a critical part of the post-apartheid healing process for the nation of South Africa and its people. Rogan (2011:1) observed that “within a country where there were many opinions of how the reconciliation process should look. Many people thought that South Africa needed trials similar to the Nuremburg Trials to achieve justice for the people.” However, South Africa, under the guidance of the then president of the Republic of South Africa Mr. Nelson Mandela, decided to form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in which victims told their stories of oppression and degradation of human rights. This is where the oppressors came forward, honestly, with the crimes they had committed to receiving a governmental pardon.

Women are by nature storytelling individuals and that too influenced my choice of the narrative inquiry research method. Connelly and Clandinin (1990:3) concur with this view and refer to Elbaz’s exploration of the “voice”, which aligned narrative with feminist studies.

The above discussion suggests that narratives have a gendered nature. The gendered nature of narratives takes one to the case of the storytelling of two Zulu women in the book titled: “Storytelling Songs of Two Zulu Women: Recording Archetypal Rites of Passage and Mythic Paths”\_by Scheub (2006). Lydia UmkaSethemba (the wife of Sethemba) performed stories in 1968 and Asilita Philisiwe Khumalo in 1972. These were two African women, one hundred years apart and both were accomplished storytellers. Each of the women, according to Prof Joseph Mbele of St Olaf College, the reviewer of the book, took a traditional tale from the oral repertory, and as storytellers from the beginning, organised tradition as a context for the contemporary world. Mbele (in Scheub,2006,1-2) attested that by featuring two Zulu women storytellers who lived a century apart, Scheub simultaneously emphasised the

timelessness of story and confirmed the place of woman as producer of culture and provider of nurture. More than most scholars, Dr Scheub taught us to recognise storytellers as foremost theorists and philosophers of the art of storytelling. Above all, however, it is supremely significant that Dr Scheub allowed the story to speak its own truth.

Wikipedia acknowledges that in South Africa the international storyteller, Nokugcina Elsie Mhlophe, is a living example that storytelling is a profoundly traditional activity in Africa and one of the few woman storytellers in a country dominated by males. She does her most important work through charismatic performances, working to preserve storytelling as a means of keeping history alive and encouraging South African children to read. Narratology, as indicated in the forgone discussion, is an African tradition and a narrative as explained earlier is both a phenomenon and a method that is best suited for researching the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.4.1 Selection of participants**

Babbie (1989:170) states that a population is the aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. The population for this research study was all the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. Sampling is explained by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:326) as the group of participants from whom the data were collected. The sample could be selected from a larger group of persons, identified as the population and in qualitative sampling, in contrast to probabilistic sampling, information-rich cases (key informants, groups, places or events) are selected for in-depth study. In other words, the sample is chosen because it is likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating. The research sample in this study consisted of four Black women academic researchers at the CEDU at Unisa and they gave rich information about the topic under investigation.



### **3.4.1.1 Purposive sampling**

Macmillan (2006:92) states that in purposive sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population representative or informative about the topic. The initial plan was to have participants with varying academic experiences at Unisa (e.g., varying from 5-20 years) to get a wealth of information but it proved impossible. I also invited Black women associate professors and full professors to participate in the study. Unfortunately, none responded to the invitation or their verbal assurances never materialised. Four participants finally accepted the invitation. I purposefully selected participants at the CEDU at Unisa who had more than five years of academic lecturing experience to obtain rich information about the problem under investigation. Stones (1988:150) adds that the types of individuals who are pre-eminently suitable for participating in a specific kind of research are those who have experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched, are verbally fluent and able to communicate their thoughts, feelings and perceptions in relation to the researched phenomenon.

### **3.4.1.2 The description of the sample**

The sample for this study consisted of four Black women academic researchers from the various departments at the CEDU at Unisa. Three of the four participants were senior lecturers with doctoral degrees and one was a lecturer engaged in doctoral study at the time of the interview. Three participants had more than five years' lecturing experience at Unisa. Only one participant had more than 13 years of lecturing experience of which ten were on a contract basis. All participants volunteered to participate in the study. Qualitative research is characterised by lower sample numbers, than the quantitative approach. Williams (1998:8) confirms that the objective of the qualitative research is in-depth analysis rather than statistical comparison and generalisation; thus, the number of cases, people, events, settings that are examined in a given study might be quite small. The four participants were sufficient because McMillan and Schumacher (2010:328) state that qualitative research samples may range from 1 to 40 or more. The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the primary data collection strategy, and the availability of information-rich cases.

### **3.4.2 Data collection**

Data collection techniques refer to the methods or procedures that a researcher employs to collect the information relevant to address the research question. Williams (1998) says that a data collection technique is a research strategy, a subset of research design. It includes elements of data collection and interpretation and emerges from both the research purpose and question. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:340), in qualitative research, a researcher must search and explore with a variety of methods until a deep understanding of the researched phenomena is achieved. Most qualitative research depends on the use of multimethod strategies to collect data.

Kraus (2005:764) maintains the goal of a qualitative investigation is also a goal of narrative inquiry, which is to understand the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the point of view of those involved in the situation of interest. Flexibility in design, data collection, and analysis of research are strongly recommended in order to gain “deep” understanding and valid representation of the participants’ viewpoints. In this study, in-depth interviews were used as the primary tool of data collection and digital recording and field notes were also used.

#### **3.4.2.1 Narrative inquiry as a tool for data collection**

Webster and Mertova (2007:1) state:

*“Narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories.”*

There is a link between narrative inquiry and storytelling. Narrative inquiry is not only a research strategy but it is also a tool or a means of investigating stories of experience from people. The best way of knowing stories of experience from human beings is by letting the participants narrate their stories to the researcher. There is an element of

the interconnectedness of narrative and human experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) point out, “it is equally correct to say “inquiry into the narrative” as it is “narrative inquiry.” By this, we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method.” As a narrative inquirer, I aimed to investigate the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. Connelly and Clandinin confirm that “narrative inquirers study experience.” In this study, I used in-depth interviews as the main tool to collect data from the participants. Clandinin (2006:46) states:

*“Narrative inquirers studied the individual’s experience in the world, an experience that was storied both in the living and telling and that could be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, writing and interpreting texts.”*

As a narrative inquirer, I engaged with the participants through in-depth interviews to enable them to narrate their stories. I, as a researcher, and the participants entered into a narrative relationship of sharing experiences and of reliving experiences which resulted in interview transcripts and finally in a narrative text, the final research report.

#### **3.4.2.2 In-depth phenomenological interviews**

My aim was to gain insight into the experiences of the participants. Kraus (2005:765) refers to this kind of action as “taking the point of view of the other.” As this study was phenomenological in nature, it was important for me to use in-depth phenomenological interviews. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:317) state:

*“The in-depth interview is meant to be a personal and intimate encounter in which open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories.”*

I found the in-depth interviews to be relevant to this study because the aim was to document the narratives of the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:356) add that phenomenological interviews are used to study the meanings and essence of a lived

experience among selected participants. They further explain that such studies investigate what was experienced, how it was experienced and what meanings the interviewees assigned to the experience. In this study, face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded with a digital recorder. The in-depth interviews allowed each participant to narrate her story in privacy without any disturbances. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2007) elucidate this point by stating:

*“The narrative interview (henceforth, NI) envisages a setting that encourages and stimulates an interviewee (who is NI is called an ‘informant’) to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social context. The technique derives its label from the Latin word narrare, to report, to tell a story.”*

The participants narrated their experiences by responding to the research questions during the interviews. I encouraged participants to tell their stories by probing into what they narrated. Christenson and Larry (2011:56) describe an interview as a “data collection method in which an interviewer asks the interviewee a series of questions, often with prompting additional information.” Hennik (2011:109) concurs that an in-depth interview is a one-on-one method of data collection that involves an interviewer and an interviewee.

I conducted a one-hour long interview with each participant. The interview schedule (Appendix G) served as an interviewer guideline. The questions in the interview guide were based on the research questions that were designed to elicit information about the primary research question.

#### **3.4.2.2.1 Interview procedures**

After receiving the Ethical Clearance Certificate from the Unisa Ethics Committee and the permission to conduct research at Unisa (SRIHDC-Institutional permission to conduct research involving Unisa staff, Appendix B), I identified potential participants who would give rich information about the problem under investigation.

I sent out a letter by means of an e-mail to the carefully selected participants requesting them to participate in an interview (See Appendix E) voluntarily. Most participants replied by means an e-mail and some by telephone to inform me that they accepted the request to participate in my research.

After the receipt of the acceptance by each participant, I requested a suitable date for the interview. On the day of the interview, after entering the offices of the participants, I greeted and thanked them for agreeing to take part in my research. I then explained the purpose of the study and that the interview would take approximately an hour. I also explained to each participant that she had the right to refrain from answering any sensitive questions and that the right to withdraw participation from the study at any stage should she wish. I assured each participant of confidentiality and anonymity. Before starting with the interview, I gave each participant the interview schedule (Appendix G) that contained the research questions to peruse and if she agreed to be interviewed, to sign the Consent Form (See Appendix F). I also explained to each participant that the interviews would be digitally recorded.

All the interviews took place at the participants' workplace, Unisa main campus, Pretoria. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:321) point out that qualitative research occurs in a natural setting: an actual classroom, school, clinic or neighbourhood et cetera. Interviews took place in the privacy of their offices except for one participant who requested that the interview be held in my office. I started with the interviews after I received the participants' preferred dates.

**Participant 1** was on study leave when I requested for the interview. She requested the interview to be held in her office because there would be no disturbances there.

**Participant 2** requested the interview to be held in her office and made arrangements not to be disturbed for an hour. I appreciated her consideration.

**Participant 3** requested the interview to be held in her office. The office was well prepared and I could see on my arrival that she was ready for the interview.

**Participant 4** requested for the interview to take place in my office. The side of the building where her office is situated is noisy and this could have disturbed us during the interview. The participant was comfortable in my office.

All the interviews went well as both the participants and I were in a familiar setting, the workplace in a relaxed atmosphere where the narrations occurred uninterrupted.

#### **3.4.2.3 Digital voice recorder**

All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder with the permission of the participants. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 346) state that to be able to capture the response of the participants, the interviews are almost always recorded for analysis. I wanted to ensure that no information would be lost. The digital voice recorder played an essential role in preserving the original verbal responses of each participant.

#### **3.4.2.4 Field notes**

I took field notes during the interview. As a form of a supplementary technique in data collection, taking field notes is intended to help with the interpretation, elaboration and corroboration of the data obtained from the in-depth interviews (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010: 362). The field notes I took contained the description of the behaviour of the participants during the interview and a brief of the office as a work environment.

In general, I noted that the participants displayed some emotion as they narrated unpleasant events they had experienced in their academic careers.

### **3.4.3 Data analysis: Analysing narratives**

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010:367) state that qualitative “data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories.” De Vos *et al.*, (2002:344) add that “data analysis

involves organising, categorising and interpreting data to present the image of the information". I followed the inductive data analysis as explained by MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367). The advantage of inductive data analysis is that the themes and conclusions emerge from the data; they are not imposed prior to data collection. Since the study was a phenomenological study, I opted for thematic phenomenological analysis suggested by Devenish (2002) in Gibirch (2013: 96-97).

The phenomenological analysis is the method of data analysis that analyses data through the identification of themes that emerge from the responses of participants during in-depth phenomenological interviews. The objective of data analysis is to understand through the actual words of the participants and how they viewed the phenomenon under investigation.

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 367-379) have broken down the process of inductive data analysis into six steps: data collection, organising data, transcribing data, coding data, categorising data and developing patterns. In the process of data analysis in this study, I did not follow the steps exactly as suggested by MacMillan and Schumacher (2010). The process of the actual data analysis that I followed was data transcription, organising data, coding data and generating categories (or themes).

#### **3.4.3.1 Step 1: Data transcription**

MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 370) describe data transcription as "the process of converting the notes and other information collected during data collection into a format that will facilitate analysis." The data collected through the in-depth interviews and the field notes were converted into written text.

#### **3.4.3.2 Step 2: Organising the data**

The responses of the different participants were organised and put into separate labelled folders. I read each participant's response and placed data that dealt with the same information together. For example, materials dealing with teaching and learning were labelled and put in the relevant folder.

### **3.4.3.3 Step 3: Coding data**

I read through the transcribed data to do the coding. Pieces of information were analysed to assign meaning to them. Pieces with same meaning were allocated a name or a code. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 370) call these small pieces of data segments. They explained that “a segment, on the other hand, is a text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea”. I read the interview transcripts several times and made notes in the margins. The data suggested the codes. The goal was to reduce a large amount of textual data to meaningful concepts while identifying themes and categories in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming that data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994:10). I found Litchman’s (2006) three Cs of analysis (codes, categories and concepts) a useful tool for data reduction in my study.

### **3.4.3.4 Step 4: Generating categories, themes and patterns**

The categories represent significant ideas used to describe the meaning of similarly coded data (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010 376). Categories were formed by putting together similar codes which were then labelled to capture the meaning of the codes. Riessman (2005:2) says in “thematic analysis “the emphasis is more on the content of a text, “what” is said than on “how” it is said, the “told” than the “telling”. She further explains that thematic analysis is useful since the interest is in the content of speech. Analysts interpret what was said by focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story. Litchman (2006:167-170) adds that “as a rule of thumb, five to seven concepts were the maximum number that could be found in a set of data”. I read the data several times after the codes were assigned to discover the themes that emerged. Data with related information was grouped together in one category.

Data analysis and the research findings are presented in Chapter 4.

The following paragraphs pay attention to ethical issues and trustworthiness as essential criteria for empirical research.



#### **3.4.3.5 Step 5: Narrative structure and representation**

The narrative representation is the final document. The themes that emerged from the data were presented as participants' verbatim quotations since this study was an evidence-based inquiry. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010: 383) state that the "presentation of the participants' language was imperative because it is the data". They further explain that evidence can be presented in several formats: short eye-catching quotations separated from the text, brief quotations within the narrative and entire paragraphs of field notes and interview transcripts. In this study, the researcher used evidence from the data and specifically the short and eye-catching quotations that were separated from the large text. In other instances, paragraphs from the interview transcripts were used in order to give a clear picture of the participants' view of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **3.5 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Qualitative researchers prefer to use different terminology such as trustworthiness of a research study instead of the terms validity and reliability that are used in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposes four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and explicitly offered these as an alternative to more traditional quantitatively-oriented criteria. Morrow (2005: 251) reminds us that Guba (2000) elaborated on these benchmarks of rigour and named them "parallel criteria", which run parallel to validity and reliability stemming from post-positivist quantitative methods of rigour. Morrow further (2005) refers to Lincoln (1995) who calls these *extrinsic* criteria, because of their emergence from outside the qualitative genre. The four suggested criteria were credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### **3.5.1 Credibility**

According to Morrow (2005:251), credibility corresponds to internal validity in quantitative approaches. Shenton (2004) finds this concept equivalent to credibility as it deals with the question, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that "credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research

findings represent a 'credible' conceptual interpretation of the data from the participants' original data." Thus, the results of this study must be believable. In this case, they should be an accurate reflection of the experiences of Black women academic researchers at Unisa who were the participants in this research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited by Shenton (2004) argue that ensuring credibility is one of the most critical factors in establishing trustworthiness. Various ways can be employed by researchers to ensure that they have accurately recorded the data (Guba, 1981:85-86). In order to ensure that I collected the data accurately, I have done data triangulation, member checks and created thick description from the data transcriptions.

### **3.5.2 Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of an inquiry can be applied or transferred beyond a particular project" (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Transferability corresponds to external validity or generalizability of the results. Morrow (2005:252) adds that transferability refers to the extent to which the reader can generalise the findings of a study to her or his own context and if it actually addresses the core issue of "how far a researcher may make claims for a general application of their theory". Shenton (2004) wrote that transferability "was concerned with the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied to other situations." I argue that the results of this study could be transferable to other universities and that when other Black women academic researchers read this research report, they may resonate with the experiences described.

### **3.5.3 Dependability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight the close ties between credibility and dependability. They argue that "in practice, a demonstration of credibility goes some distance in ensuring dependability." Credibility looks at how congruent the findings are with reality; dependability deals with the fact that if the research were repeated in the same context, with the same methods and the same participants, similar results would be obtained, as explained above. To address the dependability issue in this study, the processes

of the study were reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat similar research and reach similar conclusions.

#### **3.5.4 Confirmability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that “confirmability is a measure of how well the findings are supported by the data.” Confirmability deals with the fact that the findings of a study are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants rather than the ideas of the researcher. Triangulation was implemented in this study by using various methods of data collection, to ensure conformability. Multiple data collection techniques reduce the researcher bias.

#### **3.5.5 Triangulation**

Shenton (2004:65) says “triangulation might involve the use of different methods which form the major collection strategies for much qualitative research”. De Vos *et al.* (2005:362) explain that “data triangulation denotes the use of more than one data source: interviews, archival materials, observational data et cetera.” In-depth interviews, the audio-tape and field notes were used in this study as data collection tools.

#### **3.5.6 Member checks**

Shenton (2004:65) suggests that “checks related to the accuracy of the data may take place ‘on the spot’ in the course and at the end of the data collection process.” It could also be done when informants are asked to read the transcripts of their interviews. I did member checks by giving back the interview transcripts to the participants before starting with data analysis. I requested each participant to read her transcript in order to verify if their responses were captured correctly. This was done to verify if the participants considered the words used in the transcripts as an accurate reflection of what they meant. Where there were instances of misunderstandings, these inaccuracies were rectified.

### **3.5.7 Thick descriptions**

Morrow (2005:252) suggests the use of detailed descriptions, rich descriptions not only of the participant's experiences of phenomena but also of the contexts in which those experiences occur. I used thick descriptions extracted from the interview transcripts to capture and explain the views of the participants on their lived experiences at Unisa.

### **3.5.8 Ethical measures**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:117) state that "ethics are generally concerned with beliefs about what is right and wrong from a moral perspective." De Vos *et al.* (2005:57) define ethics as:

*"A set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students."*

In order to adhere to the ethical rules, I submitted an application for ethical clearance to the Unisa Research Ethics Committee. After receiving the approval to continue with the research, I was awarded an Ethical Clearance Certificate with the Reference number: 2014 OCTOBER/4726480/MC (Appendix D). After I received the Ethical Clearance Certificate, I applied for permission to conduct research involving Unisa staff from the Research Permission Sub-Committee of SRIHDC and I was granted the permission with the reference number; Ref#:2015-RPSC-088 (Appendix E). In my application for ethical clearance, I made an undertaking that I would adhere to all ethical requirements when conducting this research study.

#### **3.5.5.1 Confidentiality**

Christenson (2011:124) points out that "confidentiality in the context of a research study refers to an agreement between the informant and the investigator about what

might be done with the information obtained from the research participants.” I assured the participants (Appendix I) of confidentiality throughout the research process in order to avoid violation of privacy.

### **3.6.5.2 Anonymity**

The identity of the participants should be protected (Appendix I). This means that access to participants’ characteristics, responses, behaviour and other information should be restricted to the researcher. I assured the participants that their shared experiences would in no way reveal their identities. No names of participants would be revealed.

### **3.6.5.3 Informed consent**

Before starting with the interviewing process on the day of the interview, I requested each participant who had agreed to participate voluntarily in this study to sign the consent form (Appendix J). The informed consent contained information that the participant agreed voluntarily to participate in the study, she was aware that the interviews would be recorded and that the extracts of the interviews would be included in this research report. The consent form also stated that the researcher would adhere to ethical procedures as stipulated by Unisa. After each participant signed the informed consent, interviews commenced.

## **3.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter explained the qualitative research approach and the narrative inquiry research methodology employed in this investigation. The study was located in an interpretivist paradigm which favoured a naturalistic inquiry. Purposive sampling was used to select informants who would provide rich information about the phenomenon under investigation. In-depth interviews on the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa were conducted at the offices of the participants, the natural setting. Narrative, as a mode of knowing, enabled the researcher to have meaningful conversations with the participants and allowed participants to narrate their

experiences from their own point of view. In order to ensure accurate data capturing, in-depth interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. This chapter also explained the issue of trustworthiness in qualitative research. Aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were discussed as well as ethical compliance.

Chapter 4 pays attention to the presentation and discussion of research findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: EMERGING THEMES**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, I dealt with research design and methods that were employed to carry out the investigation. This chapter presents and discusses the research findings of the collected data.

#### **4.2 DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND A SUMMARY OF DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**

A sampling of the participant has been described in detail in Section 3, Chapter 3. In this section, a description of the profile of each participant is presented.

##### **4.2.1 Biographical data: Profile of the participants**

This section briefly outlines the profiles of the four participants. For the sake of ensuring the participants' anonymity in this study, they are referred to as participant 1 to 4.

Participant 1 was born in Bizana in the rural Eastern Cape and went to school in the same area. She acquired her junior degree at the University of Transkei, her Honours degree at Unisa, her Master's Degree at the University of KwaZulu Natal and her Doctor of Education degree at Unisa. After she obtained her Honours degree, she taught at Bizana for more than ten years. She also worked as a contract lecturer at the University of Natal from 2007 until 2010 while she was studying for her Master's degree. She joined Unisa in October 2010. She had been at Unisa for six years at the time of the interview.

Participant 2 was born in Mamelodi but grew up in Garankuwa in the North of Pretoria. She attended her primary and secondary schooling in Garankuwa. She acquired her BEd degree and Masters' degree at the University of Pretoria. She obtained her D Ed

at St Augustine College in Johannesburg. She joined Unisa in 2009. She had been at Unisa for seven years at the time of the interview.

Participant 3 first taught at a primary school for about five years and went back to do a one year programme in Home Economics after which she taught Home Economics from Form 1 (Grade 8) to Form 5 (Grade 12) at Soshanguve High School up to 1987. She also taught English to the Form 2 (Grade 9) classes. She went to Wits University to study for four years. After completing her degree at Wits University, she lectured at the Transvaal Teachers College in Soshanguve from 1992 to 1994. In 1995, she got a scholarship to study for her Masters' degree in the US. On return to South Africa, she worked as a facilitator for technology at the Department of Education, District Office in Pretoria. At the same time, she was a tutor for the University of Natal and an outside marker for Unisa for the NPDE qualification. She joined Unisa in 2003 on a contract basis. She was on contract from 2003 at Unisa until 2013. She had been permanent for three years at the time of the interview.

Participant 4 was born in Tembisa and completed primary education up to Standard 6 (Grade 8) there. She did Standard 7 (Grade 9) to Standard 10 (Grade 12) at a boarding school. She worked as a teacher while a part-time student at Unisa; she dropped out at Unisa and continued her studies at the Rand Afrikaans University where she attended evening classes. She also acquired her Honours degree at this University. She was an external marker for Unisa before joining as permanent staff in 2011. She had six years of experience as a lecturer at Unisa at the time of the interview.

#### **4.2.2 Analysis of data**

Data analysis has been fully described in Section 3.4.3, Chapter 3. My procedure is summarised here as follows: I read each transcription several times to familiarise myself with each participant's responses to each research question; I searched and identified segments: (word, a sentence, a few meaningful lines of text which contain one idea; I isolated and grouped together related segments to identify codes and assigned meanings or codes to the identified segments by asking the questions: What is this segment all about? What were the participants talking about in a specific



response? What words best describe this response? I identified emerging categories or themes that represent a significant idea, and I wrote the research report to present the findings and discussed the findings while incorporating participant's direct quotes. Findings were linked back to trends in literature.

Table 4.1 tabulates the data as segments, codes and themes.

**Table 4.1: Data as segments, codes and themes**

<b>Emerging themes with regard to teaching and learning</b>		
<b>Segments: participant's responses</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Categories / themes</b>
I haven't had a module that I am a primary lecturer for since I came at Unisa there is this thing of people wanting to own modules. When somebody comes in, you think that this person wants to take over...	Ownership	No sense of ownership of modules
Then she starts assessing me, do I know the module? Where did I do my degree? I am not happy with the quality of your questions How long have you been teaching	Qualification assessment Subject assessment	Qualifications are questionable
I never got to be oriented or to be shown the know-how of the first steps on how to do the ODL teaching... I was actually thrown into the deep end because most of the articles I had to actually source myself.	Orientation  Yearning for help	Need for orientation for the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers

The assignment marking was, you would be asked to take charge of the marking of the assignments as a new person you don't have the knowledge of these things		
<p>... that is my thinking that even Blacks here at Unisa, they had difficulty as much as they claimed to have been here for a long time, but I want to believe that...</p> <p>Those Blacks and Whites, you know, because they would ask me where do you come from ...</p> <p>And I think it has a history, a history of racism, of oppression, that is my own view.</p> <p>there was a time when I was told my accent, I need to do something about my accent because maybe people will not understand what I am saying ...</p> <p>It was basically, moenie lawaai maak nie, they were speaking in Afrikaans.</p>	<p>Alienation Rejection</p> <p>Racism</p> <p>Cultural intolerance</p> <p>Racism Cultural intolerance</p>	<p>Alienation of new lecturers by both White and Black staff who have long been at Unisa</p>
<b>Emerging themes in the research area</b>		
<p>My first chapter and my last chapter, but he takes forever, he takes forever, now I haven't submitted, much as, last semester I haven't produced a Master's student</p>	<p>Delayed feedback from supervisor</p> <p>Challenges in postgraduate supervision</p>	<p>Inadequate supervision in participant's research studies</p> <p>More training in postgraduate supervision</p>



<p>is an excellent programme And I attended a leadership programme, I think for me, the advantage of my age because people who have put my name forward felt that I qualified for the programme as a Black female in my thirties But now when you need support from the institution, they would say you are over 50, which is rubbish for me...</p> <p>A specific category, if they could cater for similar, which would be equivalent in terms of support especially for people who have not completed their doctoral studies</p> <p>They can do a different management programme</p>	<p>Young Academics Leadership programme</p> <p>No programmes for old academics</p>	<p>Academics Leadership programmes</p> <p>Introduction of special programmes to cater for academics over 50 years</p>
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The discussion below presents the categories or themes which emerged from the data. The discussion contains direct quotes extracted from the verbal responses of the participants from the in-depth phenomenological interviews.

#### **4.4 PRESENTATION OF THEMES: EMERGING THEMES**

In the following section, I present the findings of this empirical study. First data analysis of each theme was done. At the end of each theme, a discussion was provided where the finding was linked to literature or to the theoretical frameworks that underlined the study.

#### **4.4.1 Themes with regard to teaching and learning**

Themes that emerged with regard to teaching and learning were the following: no ownership of the modules; the need for orientation for the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers; Black women academic's qualifications are questionable; racism and alienation of new lecturers by White and Black staff who have long been at Unisa.

##### **4.4.1.1 No ownership of modules**

Teaching and learning is the core business of the academic staff. Academic staff are allocated modules either as primary or secondary lecturers. A primary lecturer is a coordinator for a specific module and bears more responsibility for the module than a secondary lecturer. The participants complained that they had been at Unisa for more than five years but they felt that they had no ownership of the modules they taught because they had never been primary lecturers; all of them were secondary lecturers: Participant 1 narrated:

*“First of all, the modules I was hired to teach in this institution since I came, I have never felt like this is my module. Since I came here I got this professor teaching the module, or in fact, it was two professors then it was two of us who were hired to come and do this module and we were always treated like we were assistants to these professors.”* (Participant 1)

Participant 1 perceived herself and her colleague as assistants to the two professors because she never felt that she owned the modules that she taught. An assistant is perceived as a mere helper who cannot co-own or act as a primary lecturer to lead and carry the responsibility associated with the primary lecturer. Other participants shared the same sentiments.

Participant 2 highlighted that those who had been teaching the modules for long had a tendency to own them:

*“I actually got to understand that later, that at Unisa there is this thing of people wanting to own modules. And when you own a module, when somebody comes in, you think that this person wants to take over and you still want to, there was this thing that if you have been teaching the module for ten years, and you feel that it is your module, anybody who comes in, you want them to operate on your terms.”* (Participant 2)

This practice of holding on to the modules according to the above narration implied that primary lecturers expected newcomers to work on their terms. Thus, newcomers could not make a contribution to the module. Participant 4 echoed the observation by participant 2 as she pointed out that a secondary lecturer did not have much say in a module:

*“When I attended I was just a secondary lecturer. You know if you are secondary lecturer, you don’t have much to say. That is my problem, you don’t have much to say.”* (Participant 4)

It was problematic that secondary lecturers had no contribution to make in the modules. The three participants were unanimous in expressing their dissatisfaction about not being primary lecturers but participant 3 shared a different experience altogether. She developed her own modules because Education Technology was new when she joined Unisa. She said:

*“But I was doing technology of education and then I developed my own module, I had four modules. Ja, because the programme was new and then they didn’t have modules, technology was a new thing.”* (Participant 3)

Participant 4 got an opportunity to be a primary lecturer because she developed her own modules in Education Technology which were not in existence when she joined Unisa.

## **DISCUSSION**

Hinton (2009:395) describes a situation similar to the one experienced by the participants as marginalisation in the academy. It comprises an outsider-within status that Black women often encounter in work situations based on race, class and gender. Hinton further explains that it occurred when Black women found themselves in situations where they were not recognised as part of the mainstream and were perceived as outsiders that existed within an institution or workplace. A common thread running through the participants' narratives was that they were unhappy about their status as secondary lecturers after they had been at Unisa for more than five years. They received no empowerment from the primary lecturers in terms of module leadership. Primary lecturers protected their space. They protected their territories and that clearly confirmed what Hinton (2000) described as the outsider-within status. The participants were already within Unisa but were not recognised as part of the mainstream.

Hinton (2009) further describes such situation as “power living” in the academy. The participants had to take instructions from the primary lecturers. Primary lecturers held on to the modules in order to exercise their power. They perceived the new lecturers as people who came to invade their modules or their territories. Lecturers were in a lower position than professors in terms of seniority. They could not challenge their power because professors possessed expert knowledge. This was “power living”: professors would not abdicate their positions.

### **4.4.1.2 Need for orientation in the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers**

Participants expressed a need for orientation in the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers who had just joined Unisa because most were not involved in ODL prior to joining Unisa. It was important that novice lecturers were oriented to ODL modules to assist with their teaching task.

Participant 1 shared:

*“But I’ve never got to be oriented or to be shown the know-how of the first steps on how to do the ODL teaching you know. I was just given the tutorial letters, the tutorial letters and even there I was just a secondary lecturer in all the modules that I have been with. So this is a challenge, I haven’t yet been fully, you know, established in the teaching of all the forms.”(Participant 1)*

Participant 1 highlighted a very important point: *“to be shown the know-how of the first steps on how to do the ODL teaching.”* The findings indicated that ODL teaching involved tutorial letters. The participant complained that being given the task of compiling tutorial letters without explanation was a challenge. Five years later, the participant stated that she was not yet fully established in the teaching of all forms. She elaborated on how she thought the novice lecturers could be mentored or assisted in teaching and learning:

*“If there can be a somebody, who may be a primary lecturer, like in my case, where I have always been the secondary lecturer, if the primary lecturer can sit you down and say this is how you do one, this is how you do two, this is how you do three. Unlike the case of just being given, okay, set five questions which are what has been done, set five questions on this section, what and then you find that those questions you set, they are not even there in the question paper at the end of the day. So it is like you are just a baby whose, I don’t know what your role is.”(Participant 1)*

The issue of being a secondary lecturer re-surfaced. The suggestion made with regard to orientation in the modules was that primary lecturers should sit down with novice lecturers and practically show them how things were to be done. For example, the setting of examination questions rather than just giving novice lecturers study material and instructions to set examination questions, which ultimately did not appear in the final version of the question paper. Leaving a novice lecturer to find out things on her own created bad feelings. This confirmed the need for orientation in the teaching of ODL modules.



Participant 2 emphasised the importance of orientation:

*“But I was actually happy when I came to Unisa, I got to teach ... and you know I was actually thrown in the deep end and because most of the articles I had to source myself.”*(Participant 2)

One deduced that participant 2 also had to search for articles which were used as study material on her own without any help from primary lecturers. Another challenge was the marking of assignments:

Participant 2 said:

*“I think the challenge was, the challenge was assignment marking. The assignments where you would be asked to take charge of the marking of the assignments, as a new person you don’t have knowledge of these things, you need support, and I felt that I was being, I was being abused. I was being told to do things I had no knowledge of, I didn’t have enough support.”* (Participant 2.

It was important for the participant to be shown how to mark assignments as novice lecturers had no prior experience of this in an ODL institution. It caused frustration for novice lecturers when they are left to find out how to do things on their own.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to Yusuf (2014:286), at Lagos State University, successful female professors who could act as role models for the upcoming women academics were lacking. Yusuf found that experienced professors left new women lecturers to find their way in the dark and did not offer them any academic help. Participant 2 described the situation at Unisa: *“I was actually thrown in the deep end and because most of the articles I had to source myself.”* This appears to be a cycle that the new lecturers in academia encounter. They had to suffer like their antecedents. No one should make things easy for them. The above finding resonates with Mabokela (2002: 194) who

found that Black women lecturers lacked guidance and support from senior colleagues. Mabokela's research highlighted that colleagues with more research experience were unwilling to assist or share their knowledge with new lecturers.

Similarly, the participants indicated that at Unisa they did not get enough support from their senior colleagues. Unisa as an ODL institution operates differently from other higher education institutions. Participants raised issues concerning the marking of assignments and sourcing of articles for teaching. The omission of questions set by novice lecturers in the final version of exam papers indicated the need for an orientation programme which also dealt with setting assignment and examination questions. Novice lecturers needed to learn specific teaching and learning skills from the primary lecturers and from experienced professors early in their academic careers. Participant 2 said, *"I think especially professors, they need to mentor you into teaching and learning, mentorship doesn't have to end up with you writing an article."* Getting support for tuition matters could improve the skills of novice lecturers and would benefit the College of Education as well as Unisa.

Tillman (2012:142) emphasised that mentoring the Black faculty in the PWIs was indispensable for the success of Black female faculty. Tillman (2012) suggested a building of a network of mentors in one's field of specialisation as well as across the disciplines early in one's career. He suggested that multiple mentors could assist in different ways. Participant 2 suggested that professors should not only offer mentorship in research (i.e. article writing) but should also provide mentorship in teaching and learning. Tillman's suggestion of multiple mentors could assist, for instance different mentors for teaching and learning and for research.

Similarly, Mokhele (2013:618) emphasised the importance of communities of practice that could provide support to emerging researchers. She gave the example of one participant who joined a Transformation Forum where she met other Black scholars with whom she exchanged notes. This could work well for novice lecturers at CEDU and at Unisa. Black women academics could start their own communities of practice in order to get guidance and support in academic matters to avoid the dependency on White senior academics.

#### 4.4.1.3 Black women academic's qualifications were questionable

The third theme that emerged was that Black women academics' qualifications were questionable. It was discussed above that the participants served as secondary lecturers or as 'assistants' under the professors who gave them no support in teaching and learning matters. Some indicated that the examination questions they were instructed to set were discarded and did not appear in the final examination paper. These incidents were an indication that the participants' expert knowledge of the modules was doubted. It was, therefore, not surprising when some participants expressed their concern about professors who constantly questioned them about where they obtained their qualifications.

Participant 2 narrated:

*"So this was the approach of the associate professor, who said you are not going to come in, then she starts assessing me, do I know the module? You know, do I really fit in? Do I know education law? Where did I do my degree? You know, all that. You know I was not feeling comfortable." (Participant 2)*

According to the above narration, the professor had doubts about the participant's knowledge of education law. The questions regarding the source of her degree indicated doubt about the quality of her qualification as well as the credibility of the institution that issued her degree. It appeared as if the participant was being assessed whether she was fit enough to be at Unisa or not. Participant 2 further explained:

*"I don't know but I think it is the thinking of our white colleagues sometimes, you know I had a feeling that when I started working at Unisa that Black academics are undermined. They are questioning your qualifications, they are questioning your integrity as an academic, they are questioning whether you deserve to be at Unisa, You know, and I think to a large extent it was about undermining your quality of education." (Participant 2)*

Participant 2 was of the opinion that White colleagues looked down upon Black academics, their qualifications and quality of their education.

Participant 3 also experienced questioning about her qualifications:

*“You know because they would ask me where do you come from, this and that, you know every time you were interviewed. You know how long have you been teaching, in the end my, my argument is always, you know, because they were asking about experience, working at Universities, and they would say that and that.”*(Participant 3)

Participant 3 felt she was interrogated about where she came from, her teaching experience and whether she had worked at other universities or not. Participants felt uneasy about the questioning but could not avoid answering questions.

## **DISCUSSION**

Maylor (2009:75) observed that in her university in the UK assumptions were made about someone's ability on the basis of skin colour and that the historical devaluing of Black people's intelligence, abilities and skills persisted. The above finding demonstrated that the participants were constantly questioned about their qualifications and their knowledge of specific disciplines. This links with Maylor's (2009) comment about devaluing of Black people's intelligence, abilities and skills. The quality of knowledge of the Black women academics was assessed based on their skin colour. Participant 2 put it explicitly, *“They are questioning your qualifications, they are questioning your integrity as an academic, they are questioning whether you deserve to be at Unisa.”* South Africa's history of apartheid designed Bantu education which was inferior as compared to the education of the Whites. South Africa did away with Bantu education years ago but in 2009, White academics still perceived qualifications of Black academics to be of low standard and poor quality.

#### **4.4.1.4 Racism and alienation of new lecturers by both White and Black staff who have long been at Unisa**

The questioning suggested that new lecturers were not welcomed. Participants narrated that they experienced alienation on their arrival at Unisa from both White and Black staff who had long been at Unisa. Unisa has been multiracial since its establishment. The staff co-exists and should work together in a variety of aspects. Some participants shared instances where they felt that they were not welcomed when they arrived at Unisa:

Participant 4 described the situation on her arrival at Unisa and said:

*“Unisa generally speaking can be a very cold context. Where it could be very difficult for you to access people, people who are here forever, but then generally maybe let me talk about my personal experience.”* (Participant 4)

The unfriendliness described by participant 4 links to Tillman’s (2012:121) finding that Black women academics in the US found themselves in “chilly and unwelcoming” environments in academia, in spaces not meant for them. Similarly, the long-time staff at Unisa found it difficult to welcome new lecturers.

Participant 3 explained that it was difficult to form relationships with academics who have long been at Unisa. She said:

*“So it was white people and I mean there was this unfriendliness, those Blacks and whites. You know but as far as the relationship, here it was difficult to develop a relationship with the people who have been at Unisa for a very long time, it was very, very difficult.”* (Participant 3)

Not only was it the White academics who were unfriendly towards new lecturers but also the Black academic staff who have long been at Unisa. Forming relationships with

people who have long been at Unisa was difficult. This was an alienating attitude which indicated that newcomers were not welcomed.

Participant 2 shared her thoughts on what she thought were the reasons for the alienating attitude that she received as a new lecturer:

*“And I think it has a history, a history of racism, of oppression, that is my own view. You can quote me, you know, the whole thing of Black and white is still existing, we cannot avoid that. You are a Black person, you are inferior. I am a white person, I have been teaching this module for ten years or 15 years and I know what I am doing, you are from ..... there was a time when I was told my accent, I need to do something about my accent because maybe people will not understand what I am saying.”* (Participant 2)

It was alluded above that South Africa has a history of racism and of oppression which Black people endured under the apartheid government. Participant 2 strongly felt that Unisa racism still exists. The participant was criticised for her African accent and warned that people would not understand her. Black people speak English with an African accent. It appeared that the accent was not good enough for the White colleague, who advised her that she needed to do something about her accent at that stage in her life.

Participant 3 narrated a racial incident that occurred on the day she and other new colleagues were shown their offices at Unisa. They were reprimanded in Afrikaans that they were making noise:

*“You know they were scolding us that we are making noise and we are not supposed to make noise here at Unisa, you know it was like somebody was saying, press the button and most of them opened the doors because they wanted to see these people who are making noise. It was basically, monie lawaai maak nie, they were speaking in Afrikaans.”* (Participant 3)

Adults were reprimanded in Afrikaans for making noise. This action related to what participant 2 stated above about prevailing racism.

It was interesting to note that participant 1 had a different opinion on the racism issue. She said:

*“I am saying that the module I that I was hired to come and do, was led by the two white professors, but I don’t think it is because of my Blackness that I wasn’t given a chance to show my abilities in the module. I just think maybe it is, maybe it is the issue of seniority. I think because you are just a lecturer, you have only Masters you don’t have a PhD, what can you know about this, well that is me, that is my interpretation of it.”* (Participant 1)

Participant 1 perceived her lack of opportunity in a module by the White professors who were primary lecturers was a matter of seniority not of racism. She thought it was because she did not have a PhD in the module, hence she was perceived not to have expert knowledge in the module.

## **DISCUSSION**

Tillman (2012:121) referred to the PWIs in the US when he described the “chilly and unwelcoming environments” in which Black female students, faculty and administrators found themselves. He explained that the environment was alienating for many Black women and men. The environment continued to remind them that they worked in spaces that were not meant for them as they were continuously viewed as outsiders who found little support for their academic endeavours.

Wright *et al.* (2007:147) refer to ‘institutional racism,’ which he defined as “a set of subtle ways in which racism was institutionalised; in particular, the way in which power appeared to be naturalised in the body of the white male”. He further explained that the disadvantage of institutional racism was the hindrance of the progress of the minority ethnic groups. Unisa has been a multiracial institution since its establishment

but the merger of Unisa, Vista University and Technikon SA in 2004, Black academics were hired in large numbers to re-dress the imbalances of the apartheid regime. As Mabokela (2000) rightly observed, the influx of Blacks into the academic spaces previously dominated by Whites presented a threat of Africanization of the PWIs institutions. The Black women academics in my view also posed a threat to the White Afrikaner academic staff at Unisa who perceived the Black academics as people who had come to take their spaces and modules.

Participant 2 alluded to the fact that her accent was questioned by a White female professor. This reminded me of the reasons why feminism was rejected by many African women. Hudson-Weems (in Alridge & Young, 2000) said that when one thinks of feminism, one has to deal with the reasons for what the term was initially designed for, who designed it and what were the needs of the women who designed it. White women created feminism and it was exclusionary of Black women and their needs. A White female academic complained about the accent. Therefore, this study aligned itself with womanism designed for women of African descent and aimed at re-claiming the rich legacy of African womanhood. White female academics were not supportive of Black women lecturers as illustrated by the issue of accent. This emphasised that the Black academic woman was in a space that was not meant for her.

Participant 3 highlighted that the alienating attitude did not only come from the White or Afrikaans speaking staff but also from the Black academic staff who had long been at Unisa. Hinton (2009:295) mentions assimilation of Black faculty by the white faculty which he explained as another type of marginalisation found in academia. Assimilation occurred when “Black female faculty were forced either covertly or overtly, to compromise their gender, racial or ethnic identities to conform to the unrealistic expectations their white colleagues expected them to”. Hinton further explained that kind of academic culture required successful Black academic women to assimilate perspectives that were different and contradictory in their beliefs.

In African culture we embrace newcomers, we accept them and show them around but the Black academics who had long been at Unisa acted contrary to this African way of life. They acted like their White colleagues and demonstrated signs of



assimilation, and alienated new Black women academics. The Black academics who had long been at Unisa also appeared to be in defense of their spaces, their territories just like the White academics by alienating their fellow new Black lecturers. All institutions must accommodate new staff. In any working environment new and old staff must work together to realise the objectives of the institution which in this case is to produce useful graduates. There has to be a good working relationship between staff for good results.

#### **4.4.2 Themes in the research area**

Research is of the utmost importance for academic staff. It plays a significant role in the promotion of staff to another academic rank. Data revealed that there was a great need for more training in postgraduate supervision, a need for more training in article writing and the participants experienced inadequate supervision in their own research studies.

##### **4.4.2.1 More training in postgraduate supervision**

Participants required more training in postgraduate supervision. Participant 1 shared that she had not successfully supervised any postgraduate student to completion:

*“Masters students, I haven’t, I haven’t produced a master’s student as well, I have the first one who is about to submit, he is working on his final touches of his dissertation.”* (Participant 1)

Participant 1, with more than five years of teaching at Unisa, was expecting one Master’s degree student to complete the degree in 2016. The participant had not been allocated a doctoral student to supervise because she was working on her own doctoral studies.

Participant 3 did not have any student who had completed a postgraduate degree under her supervision:

*“I have the mini-dissertation, two master’s students. No, I have not, I have not produced any because these master’s students I knew and they struggled, actually this year they struggled with their research proposals.” (Participant 3)*

Participant 3 like participant 1 had not produced any postgraduate students. The two mini-dissertation students she was allocated struggled with proposal writing.

However, Participant 4 had two students who completed their Master's degrees albeit with mini-dissertations:

*“Ja, not D Ed. D Ed, I am still starting because you can’t supervise and I do have two that completed MEd, I must say I am proud that I did, although it is a mini-dissertation, they don’t want to recognise it now, I don’t know why, but that is my experience. Why do they say we should supervise them, what is going to happen is that when you apply for promotion and for anything, they are not recognising it.” (Participant 4)*

Participant 4 was dissatisfied that the MEd mini-dissertation was not recognised for promotion purposes. She raised a concern about why it was still offered at Unisa.

Participant 2, unlike all the participants, had no problems concerning the supervision of postgraduate students. She already had a doctoral degree when she came to Unisa in 2009:

*“I have one doctorate student that graduated last year, and I have two Masters students that graduated already and the other one is actually submitting for examination at the end of the year, he will graduate next year. So I think in terms of supervision I am doing well.”(Participant 2)*

The above narration indicated that academic staff who were already in possession of a doctorate degree when they joined Unisa did not have problems in postgraduate supervision. Participant 2 had produced three MEd students.

## **DISCUSSION**

Mabokela (2002:193) observed that, as lecturers, many women have limited exposure to and involvement in research activities that is why it is an even more significant challenge for them to supervise students. The above finding revealed that the participants who were still working on their doctoral degrees had not supervised any postgraduate student to completion but the participant with a doctoral degree when she joined Unisa could count a number of postgraduate students successfully supervised. Some participants raised concerns that their students struggled during the proposal stage. The participants were not involved in other research activities other than their own and those of their students. The additional research involved would have been beneficial to them and their students.

Yusuf (2014:282-283) in his research on Nigerian universities highlighted the absence of women in high positions due to lack of the required qualifications for advancement into higher ranks in the academy. The experiences shared above indicate that those who joined Unisa without a doctoral degree spent three years or more on their doctoral studies and during those years they could not develop in other research aspects. They were then faced with the double responsibility of improving their qualifications and supervising their students at the same time. I concur with Yusuf (2014) that it is important that Black women academic researchers should strive to improve their academic qualifications on time to avoid lagging behind.

Schultze (2013:33) highlighted the importance of a doctoral degree in academics. She acknowledged that doctoral work was a long and challenging rite of passage aimed at changing students into scholars and equipping them with skills and qualities necessary for successful and productive participation in academic communities. This underlines the importance of a doctoral degree in academia. Doctoral qualifications enable one

to participate meaningfully and successfully in academic circles. Without it, no academic staff member can be perceived as a scholar.

#### **4.4.2.2 More training in article writing**

The above finding revealed that the participants needed more training in postgraduate supervision for students. The identification of such a research need has a connection with the need for more training in article writing. The publishing of research articles in accredited research journals has become the defining factor for the evaluation of the performance of academic institutions in research. Income generation has become the main preoccupation of universities and article publication generates substantial funds for universities as research institutions.

Participant 1 did not share any information about article publications because, at the time of the interview, she was on study leave to complete her doctoral studies. Participant 2 explained that she had co-authored articles with one professor and one article with a student. However, these articles were published in a journal which had lost accreditation. Participant 2 said:

*“I have co-authored articles with one professor, she is a full professor in our department, I have co-published with a student and unfortunately that article disappeared because the article was labelled as a questionable journal. I have published and sole-authored an article in the same journal, which was discredited because you know it was a questionable journal and I felt it was really unfair because I put so much energy in that article.”*

(Participant 2)

Participant 2 already had a doctoral degree when she joined Unisa. This information suggests that new lecturers should receive an orientation about accredited journals. Despite her efforts, Participant 1 still felt that it was difficult to publish:

*“As an individual, I can’t say it is challenges per se but I think I do experience challenges because it is difficult to publish as a researcher. ... it is difficult first and foremost to get a journal, although we have a list for the College of Education,... they take two or three years to accept your article. Long time and you know you want to grow, you want to publish, you want to be a scholar but when you don’t get feedback as quickly as you want to, then it discourages you.”* (Participant 2)

One gathered from the above narration that it was challenging to find good journals and it took two to three years to get feedback.

Participant 3 published three articles with her second supervisor. She said:

*“I did publish, I published articles, you know, I did publish with ... about three articles, ... I did part of the article but then I didn’t know that was an article, you understand, for me it was information that was going to go into my work.”* (Participant 3)

However, Participant 3 pointed out that at the time she did not know that she was writing articles. She was under the impression that the work was going to form part of her study.

Participant 4 shared similar experiences to Participant 2. She also published in a non-accredited journal. She said:

*“I only published once. It is achievement in the sense that so many people are quoting it, by finding from the research gate, people read the article, but unfortunately, it was the wrong journal.”* (Participant 4)

Participant 4 also lacked the know how about accredited journals and did not benefit from that publication. She published a book chapter in a book from her doctoral study but again experienced problems. She said:

*“Ja, but now again they are saying it doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter because of lack of weight. Because they say it is prescribed book, it is not an academic book. I don’t know why.”(Participant 4)*

The book chapter carried less weight than a research article in an accredited journal.

## **DISCUSSION**

Tsikana (2007:28) highlights that research received priority as early as the 1980’s and 1990’s at the University of Ghana, which were significant years in the shaping of the University of Ghana and other African universities. Some participants faced challenges concerning publication. Black women academics required training in article writing from well-established professors. Participants complained that publishing and finding a good journal was a challenge. The intervention of well-established professors could be of great assistance to lecturers. I agree with Mabokela (2002:193) as she rightly observed that many women in the academy have not been exposed to a culture of research as students and did not have to pursue research as a condition of employment until recently. She continued to say that some women academics still viewed research as a mysterious process that induced great anxiety.

The fact that participants published in non-accredited journals was due to a lack of knowledge on the part of the novice lecturers. These mistakes indicated a great need for more training in article writing and publishing.

### **4.4.2.3 Inadequate supervision of participants’ own research studies**

Since some participants were students of Unisa and of other universities, it was of interest to find out how they experienced postgraduate supervision in their own studies. Participant 3 and 4 shared interesting but different experiences concerning

supervision in their studies. Participant 3 studied for her doctoral degree at Unisa while participant 4 did hers at the University of Johannesburg. Participant 3, a Unisa doctoral student, shared that she went through the hands of three different supervisors for her doctoral degree. Two were Black male professors and one was a White male professor. The first Black male supervisor passed away in 2011 and she was allocated a new supervisor. Her second supervisor wrote articles from her doctoral work without her being aware that those were articles:

*“He writes a paper and then, and he would say to me I wrote a paper, the information that you gave me and then fine, you are included and then I didn’t understand those exchanges at that time. But then, and you know he wrote a paper, and the paper was published and one day he says to me, you owe me this much. And he explained that now if you write a paper, together and you have to pay this, I pay this and that, you understand.”*

Thus, the supervisor took advantage of the naiveté of the student and produced articles from her uncompleted study. Furthermore, the supervisor explained that she owed him which implied he had the right to publish an article based on her work and could benefit out of her study. The only explanation the participant was given was that in future they would share the costs for publication. The participant explained that the feedback she got from the supervisor was not clear enough:

*“I would go to him and say, I don’t understand what I should write here, your comments are this and that but I am not sure what is it that I have to write, so what do you want me to write about, or thinking along, not actually what I should write, my thinking and he would, you know he would say things and I would say but now where does this come from.” (Participant 3)*

The participant explained that she realised that the misunderstanding was caused by the fact that the supervisor was not a specialist in the field in which she was

researching (i.e., Curriculum and Instruction) because he specialised in Leadership and Management. She said:

*“For me it was not relevant, I mean I am a curriculum specialist and my studies should be focused on local curriculum and he would tell me about management, and I would say, Prof,...., I know when you are a curriculum person, but I am not focusing on management, as much as you are in management. You are in the management department. So he says, no these things are the same, and how can a professor say that.”*

Thus, this participant was allocated a supervisor who had not specialised in the same discipline as her. After writing eight chapters, she realised that their different fields of specialisation had caused a misunderstanding although the supervisor insisted that *“these things are the same.”* The relationship broke down when the supervisor told the student she was not ready to submit after she has written eight chapters. The following excerpt from the interview follows as substantiation: Participant 3:

*“You understand, and then he made me do eight chapters and I had eight chapters, and I said to him, hey now we have to sit together and structure this according now, according to research you know, you know accordingly, because I want to submit, I have never, I have up till today seen a man jump like this from his chair because I went to his office, he jumped.*

Researcher: *Why did he jump?*

Participant 3: *He said to me you are not ready. I said I cannot wait ...*

Researcher: *After finishing eight chapters?*

Participant 3: *I cannot be working with you for such a long time and stay here nights and days and weekends I am here, you saw me. And writing eight chapters and then*



*you tell me I am not ready. I said, Prof, because you don't know what to do.*"(Participant 3, Interview 3)

The refusal of the supervisor to allow the participant to submit her study delayed her progress and she had to approach the research office to request for a new supervisor, a third supervisor. Participant 3 expressed her feelings about Black male professors based on her experiences with her second supervisor. Participant 3 said:

*"The male professors, they want to, you know they want to go up the ladder, using other peoples...I am telling you, I am, you know I was frustrated like I stayed like for months doing nothing."*(Participant 3)

The participant felt that some professors go up the ladder by using other people's work. She then identified a Black female professor to supervise her and informed the research office but to her amazement, she was allocated a White male supervisor. In order to continue with her studies, she decided not to challenge the research authorities. Although the new supervisor took time to give feedback, there was progress and she was content with him. She said:

*"The supervision is better, but let me tell you, I give him a chapter, it takes two months. The feedback takes too long. I had to look at my studies again and I restructured my studies, so when I gave it to him in February, last year, February last year, it was eight chapters and he said, let us take it chapter by chapter, which was okay. It was okay, you know the first two chapters, he actually took the first chapter and the last chapter, to read them together. My first chapter and my last chapter, but he takes forever, he takes forever, now I haven't submitted, much as, last semester...Ja, you know, he takes forever. I am very positive and he will tell me, here I don't understand, what do you want to say, I mean those are the comments, you know, what do you want to say here, I don't think*

*this information is relevant. Ja, constructive comments but he takes forever. He takes forever.” (Participant 3)*

The participant commended the third supervisor for his supervision skills. He made constructive comments and explained face-to-face where further explanation of certain parts of her study was required. This inspired new courage and motivation. Although the supervisor took too long to give feedback, he gave excellent guidance. With the help of the third supervisor, the participant was able to re-visit all her chapters, working backwards to effect the recommendations. The participant also learned supervision skills from her supervisor: chapters should link to demonstrate the connecting argument. Under the guidance of the third supervisor, the participant managed to complete her doctoral degree.

Participant 4 studied for her doctoral degree at the University of Johannesburg but also had to change supervisors during her doctoral studies. She said:

*“I studied at another university and the part was not practice, because I had to change supervisors. There was no progress if I can put it in that way, the first one, and the reason being the person was supervising many students, so he would confuse you with somebody else and confuse somebody else with you. So I decided to let me find another supervisor. So it delayed me for two and a half years and when I had to come back I had to wait to find a supervisor and then with the supervisor, I wouldn’t say it was too bad but I think the pace, you know because sometimes, the pace wasn’t okay. In fact, when I reflect, I think that was the best supervisor for me.” (Participant 4)*

It appeared that the supervisor had many students hence he confused them: “He would confuse you with somebody else and confuse somebody else with you”. The change of the supervisor delayed the progress of Participant 4 just as in the case of Participant 3. Participant 4 also complained about the slow pace of the supervision.

Supervision finally succeeded with their past supervisors. Participant 4 also shared that her completed study got mislaid after she submitted it to UJ for examination:

*“So they found it stayed somewhere there for four months without the other person receiving it, so it delayed.”* (Participant 4)

Thus, Participant 4 experienced a second delay. The document lay in the wrong place for four months before the correct person received it. This problem was not created by the supervisor but by the university administration.

## **DISCUSSION**

In terms of inadequate support for Black women academic researchers, Prah (2002: 29) concurs with this finding at Lagon University in Ghana. He alluded to the fact that Black women academic researchers had no support in academic development even from top management. He drew attention to the existence of a subtle form of gender discrimination wherein women were not given adequate academic support like their male counterparts.

Participant 3 narrated incidents where her second Black male supervisor published articles without her consent from her doctoral study and demanded assistance with publicity costs. This depicted unequal power relations between the female student and a Black male supervisor. According to GST, a *schema* is a network of a cognitive organisation that influences how an individual perceives the self and others (Johnson, 2009:86). It influences how one perceives the behaviour associated with women or men in a particular culture. The supervisor, as a man, saw no need to involve the student in writing the article from her unfinished study because according to his African culture, a man is superior to a woman and she should be submissive to him. Tsikana (2007:30) adds that the University of Ghana offers good education but its antecedents marked it as a dominant male space that aimed at creating modern African masculinities.

Such behaviour depicts academia as a dominant male space where modern African masculinity rules. According to Scott and Palinscar (2013:1), this concurs with Vygostkyian sociocultural theory of the genetic law of development which explains that the child's cultural development appears on the social and the psychological plane. The social plane was explained as the plane that was more relevant to the child's cultural development in society. The child is shaped by the broader cultural and societal perception formed during childhood which determines how he or she will view other individuals in future. The Black male supervisor expected the participant to accept his authority as a man. The participant as a woman had to assume a submissive role that is usually expected at home; the traditional role was carried over from home into academia.

#### **4.4.3 Themes with regard to mentoring**

The first Unisa mentorship programme was established in 2010. The Department of Education was under the College of Human Sciences at the time and it also participated in that mentorship programme. Junior academic staff were allocated as mentees to senior professors who served as their mentors. I was a mentee at the time and felt it was necessary to find out how the participants experienced the first Unisa mentorship programme of 2010. All the participants participated as mentees in that mentorship programme and shared their experiences in that regard.

##### **4.3.3.1 Dissatisfaction with the 2010 Unisa mentoring programme**

From the findings discussed above, it became clear that the Black women academic researchers at Unisa needed mentoring especially in teaching and learning and research matters. With regard to the first mentorship programme of 2010, participants 1 and 2 expressed their dissatisfaction while contrastingly participants 3 and 4 shared positive experiences. Participant 1 said:

*“Sorry, I was a mentee. Just by name that I have, so and so as my mentor. Otherwise there is nothing that I, there was no programme, there is nothing that we scheduled to say we are*

*going to do 1, 2, 3, I don't even know what was expected of me, but I didn't learn anything.*

Researcher: *Did you ever had meetings with your mentor?*

Participant 1: *No.*

Researcher:

*For example, where you discussed problem areas in your teaching and learning and may be assistance with research and publications?*

Participant 1:

*No. I never did anything, but I have a certificate of mentorship. You know what, I even think I need, when I come back after my leave, I need to have a mentor, especially with regard to teaching.”*  
(Participant 1, Interview 1)

Participant 1 complained that no formal schedule was followed; she had no meetings with her mentor but she got a certificate for participating in the mentorship programme. She expressed that she still needed mentorship with regard to teaching and hoped that she would get a mentor in this aspect when she returned from leave.

Similarly, Participant 2 did not have a good experience with her first mentorship programme:

*“Yes, I was, I am actually still a mentee. My first experience was not really a very good one because I had this professor who was proud to say I have a mentee but was not really doing anything. The mentoring that she was doing, was just to ask you a question.... it was not really productive for me as a person because I would write an article, I would give it to her, it will take forever to*

*come back for me and in terms of teaching and learning I was not getting any support, I was teaching with her in one of these modules, but like I said it was just been given study material and just do what you do. You know, so my experience of mentorship was not really good.” (Participant 2)*

Participant 2 shared that her experience of the first mentorship programme was not good. A professor who was working from home who, according to Unisa, had to have a mentee, mentored her. The participant lamented that she did not get enough support even when she gave her mentor articles to critique. The feedback took forever to return. In the participant's view, the whole mentorship programme was just a game and perceived the professor as a person who was good at writing reports in order to score good points for the performance appraisal system.

Contrary to the above, Participant 3 and 4 had positive experiences. Participant 3 shared:

*“Not necessarily teaching and learning, I would write a paper, I would write and then I would give it to her, basically it was about research. I would write, what I do, I write a complete paper, even now I have a complete paper, and then I send it to her and then she would help me correct this and say here I don't understand, rather look at it this way, doing this and that. But I have engaged.”*  
(Participant 3)

Participant 3 received research assistance from her mentor who gave her excellent guidance and at the time of the interview she had completed a full article with the help of her mentor. She was content with her mentor.

Participant 4 also had good experiences with the first mentorship programme:

*“Let me start with the first one. The first one I enjoyed it, because my, I chose my mentor, that is no 1. But my mentor could not*

*mentor me on my studies because of conflict of interest, because I was studying at another University and already I was advised, I was correcting it, and we agreed. And she was very supportive, okay ... So I would say it helped me. And you know she also came when I defended my study.” (Participant 4)*

Participant 4 had a rare opportunity of choosing her mentor. Her mentor supported her in the module that she taught and in which her mentor was the primary lecturer and she was a secondary lecturer. Her mentor supported her when she defended her study at another university where she was studying and her overall comments about her mentor were that she was very helpful to her.

## **DISCUSSION**

The literature showed that mentoring Black faculty in the PWIs institutions was indispensable for the success of Black female faculty (Tillman:2012:124). Tillman (2012) recommended the building of networks of mentors in one's field of specialisation and across the disciplines because multiple mentors could assist in different ways ranging from emotional support, social support and guidance beneficial to Black female academics.

Participants 1 and 2 could have benefitted from a network of mentors in their specialisation or from multiple mentors as suggested by Tillman (2012) above. One mentor could assist in teaching and learning and the other in research. Some participants indicated that some mentors asked them to identify problems which were a clear indication that proper guidelines for the 2010 mentorship programme were lacking.

Hirshfield and Joseph (2012: 215) echo the importance of networking in academia. They point out that especially with the faculty of colour, women in academia often lack the complex networks that their White male peers enjoyed. What these scholars suggested was that Black women academics should network on their own in order not to rely on and blame mentors allocated to them. They must own the new spaces they

have come to occupy in academia. Yusuf (2014:286) reported that women academics shied away from networking with other colleagues in the academy.

#### **4.3.3.2 Commendation of the 2016 mentorship programme of the College of Education**

In 2012, Unisa established the CEDU as an independent college that was no longer part of the College of Human Sciences. In 2016, CEDU introduced a new structured mentorship programme in which some of the participants of this study were again participating at the time of the interviews. Participants 2 and 4 shared positive experiences about this programme. Participant 2 shared:

*“But I think recently, it is improving because now I am actually getting into my sixth year within Unisa, six or seven, I think six years within Unisa and I am thinking the mentorship programme that is established by the College of Education is actually improving because you get to work with professors who are knowledgeable who are NRF rated and they actually help you, they help you, it is so different you know than five years ago. It is not a professor who comes in and just put your name there, but she helps you to register for international associations who works with you on your articles, helps you and works with you and teaches you how to be a NRF rated professors, one day you know, may be after five years, when I want to be an associated professor, I want to be a full professor, so you have this hands on professors now that they want to help you but five years ago it was not the case.” (Participant 2)*

The above quotation draws a comparison between the 2010 and the 2016 mentorship programmes. According to Participant 2, the recent CEDU mentorship programme, which is led by NRF rated professors, is helpful to the mentees. The knowledgeable professors have assisted the mentees to register with international associations and they work with the mentees on their articles. The participant is hopeful that after five



years from 2016, she may be promoted to associate professor because of the 2016 mentorship programme.

Participant 4 also shared positive experiences with the second mentorship programme. She stated:

*“Currently I am in the structured mentor meeting, although I do not mentor but I attend and what I love about it is that you choose what you want to do. And so far, like as, because I didn’t, one thing, I don’t know everything and I will never know everything. By listening to ideas, how you get ideas, like one person has now indicated to say how I can balance my teaching and research, and she is a seasoned researcher.”* (Participant 4)

Participant 4 was not a mentor in the recent CEDU mentorship programme but she attended in order to get ideas. In the 2010 mentorship programme, she already benefitted from a seasoned researcher about how to create a balance between her teaching and research. She is positive about the second mentorship programme of the CEDU.

## **DISCUSSION**

Yusuf (2014: 286) notes that successful female professors could act as role models for the upcoming women academics. When entering academia Black women researchers need guidance in teaching and learning and in research as indicated in the foregoing discussion. Black women academic researchers should also be encouraged, according to Tillman (2012: 124), to be aggressive and confident to seek opportunities to collaborate with scholars in the same disciplines as they are. This would help the up-and-coming scholars to develop faster than only relying on a mentor allocated to them.

#### **4.4.4 Themes about Unisa programmes to accelerate the development of academic staff**

The last research question aimed to establish the programmes Unisa has in place to accelerate the development of academic staff. The aim of this question was to elicit data from the participants to determine whether the Black women academic researchers benefitted from those programmes or not. Unisa has different academic programmes for the academic development of academic staff. The results revealed that the participants had participated in different Unisa programmes: the brown bag seminars, the Young Academics Leadership Programme and the Academic Qualification Improvement Programme (AQIP).

##### **4.4.4.1 The brown bag seminars**

Around 2010 when the Department of Education was under the College of Human Sciences, brown bag seminars commenced and were aimed at assisting academic staff who were still engaged in postgraduate studies. The latter could make presentations of their research chapters. The audience consisted of peers and seasoned professors who gave guidance to the presenters. Participant 1 shared her experiences about the brown bag seminars:

Participant 1 said:

*“Firstly, there is a brown bag, it is a supportive avenue for post-grad students, lecturers, if one participates in that you learn a lot from the knowledgeable academics that facilitate that.”*

(Participant 1)

Participant 1 started working at Unisa in October 2010, the year when the brown bag seminars were introduced. It was a supportive avenue for the academic staff to share with other colleagues what they were doing in their studies. According to the participant, academic staff learned from the knowledgeable professors.

#### **4.4.4.2 AQIP**

Participant 1 shared her experiences with AQIP. She commended the programme as follows:

*“And second of all, I am a beneficiary if that is the correct word, of an Academic Qualification Improvement Programme, which for me is an excellent programme, where an academic who is still studying is given time out to go and do their study and complete that is an excellent support for academics at Unisa. I am not sure if it is there in other institutions.”*(Participant 1)

Participant 1 thought AQIP was an excellent programme as it allowed its beneficiaries to take time off the campus for three years to complete their academic qualifications, especially doctoral degrees.

#### **4.4.4.3 The Young Academics Leadership Programme**

This programme was introduced around 2008 or 2009 and it was aimed at cultivating young academic leaders. Participant 2 already had her doctoral degree when she joined Unisa in 2009. She commended this programme highly. She narrated:

*“Yes, the, one of the programmes that I still even today cherish and thank Unisa for is the young academic programme. And that programme helped me to be a good academic if I can say, it exposed me to more, what is it like to be an academic at Unisa in terms of your teaching methods, in terms of your teaching and learning, in terms of your research, in terms of, you know all your key performance areas, ...I attended it for three months, I got this leadership things you know, skill, techniques, and how to be a good leader, I was given textbooks to reads, we were given assignments and all that, so it helped me that is why I may be a*

*CoD because I think I got the skill and Unisa invested a lot in me. And all that.” (Participant 2)*

In this way, Unisa ‘grew its own timber’ through the Young Academics Leadership Programme. Today, Participant 2 is the youngest Black woman CoD in the CEDU. The benefits of attending this programme were that its beneficiaries were exposed to teaching methods relevant to the teaching and learning area, skills about research and other aspects that covered all the key performance areas for academics. Relevant to the name of the programme, recipients learned more about good leadership skills and techniques. The participant valued the exposure to good books on leadership while she was on the programme.

#### **4.4.4.4 Need for programmes to cater for academic staff over 50 years of age**

Two participants in this study were over the age of 50. Unfortunately, they could not be recipients of the AQIP and Young Leadership Programme because of age. They expressed the wish for Unisa to establish programmes that would cater to academics over 50 years of age. Participant 3 said:

*“But now when you need support from the institution, they would say you are over 50, which is rubbish for me, which is rubbish, it means you know as academics over 50, we have to come up with some things which will take the University years, or for the university to support this aged, you know, we can call ourselves the aged. Now, I don’t understand why should age is a factor, age should not be a factor.” (Participant 3)*

The above demonstrates the complaint that it was unfair that Unisa did not have academic programmes for academic staff over 50 years of age. Current academic programmes at Unisa cater for academics who are 45 years old and younger. Unisa should consider a grant for the older members of staff because some departments have re-employed retired professors because of their skills. The participant raised the concern that age should not be a factor but the ability and energy of the staff over 50

years ought to be taken into consideration because this group also needs support from the university.

Participant 4 also shared the same sentiments:

*“A specific category, to also cater for similar, which would be equivalent in terms of support, especially if people who have not completed their doctoral studies, ja Masters, so they can do almost a seniority different management programme, or give time like the academic leave, so that when a person applies it should not be an issue.”* (Participant 4)

Participant 4 suggested a type of seniority programme to assist academics over 50 years who have not completed their postgraduate qualifications. She also suggested an alternative: academic leave can be extended to accommodate such academics. A report about the academic progress of each individual could be submitted and it would serve as a control measure.

## **DISCUSSION**

Black women academics have begun to access the academy in large numbers. Tsikana (2007: 29) indicated that at Lagon University there was a strong emphasis on terminal degrees which was the highest degree. This had negative implications for women academics because they embarked on terminal degrees in their mid-careers because of child-rearing. What Tsikana (2007) referred to was associated with the assertions made by the participants above. Some participants were under pressure to complete doctoral degrees and could not qualify for the university programmes to fund their qualifications because of their age. Yusuf (2014:282-283) commented that at Lagos University, there were sufficient opportunities for both male and female academics to advance academically. However, women academics lacked the required qualifications and could not occupy the high positions in that institution. He emphasised that acquiring a doctoral degree was a requirement for career advancement. It is important to emphasise the recommendation made by Tillman

(2012: 124) that on entering the academy, Black women academics should be aggressive and seize available opportunities aimed at academic development. Black women academics should collaborate with other academics and be strategic and think out of the box in order to achieve their goals.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

The aim of this chapter was to explore the narratives of the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at the Unisa. Data analysis and discussion of findings were presented using verbatim excerpts from the interviews to present the narrations of their academic experiences.

The study discussed the emerging themes according to the research questions. The results revealed that all participants identified challenges they faced in the teaching and learning area. They lamented that they were not allocated modules as primary lecturers. As secondary lecturers, they carried out what was expected of them; thus they did not perceive themselves as making any meaningful contribution to the running of the modules. They also had little knowledge about teaching in an ODL institution such as Unisa. This finding indicated a gap and a need for an orientation programme for new academics at Unisa. The third theme was that new academics felt that they were not welcomed by both White and Black academic staff who have long been at Unisa. The participants narrated various experiences to support their views.

In the research area, the experiences of the participants varied. Some participants had not supervised any postgraduate students to completion neither had they published articles. Some experienced challenges with regard to supervision in their personal studies. The challenges experienced by the participants highlighted the need for training in postgraduate supervision.

Concerning Unisa's academic programmes for the development of academic staff, the participants commended the brown bag seminars as an avenue for exchanging scholarly work with their peers. The Young Leadership and AQIP programmes, were also commended by the younger participants who were beneficiaries. The participants

who were above 50 years felt discriminated as age excluded them from current programmes at Unisa. Suggestions were made that Unisa should consider introducing programmes that would cater to academic staff over 50 years.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study investigated the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa. The main aim was: *to determine the factors that impacted the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa*. Based on this broad research aim, the objectives of this study were: to determine the challenges that Black women academic researchers experienced in the teaching and learning area, their challenges in research, to explore their experiences about Unisa mentoring programmes and to get their views on the programmes that Unisa provides to accelerate the development of academic staff. This final chapter presents the summary of this study, synopsis of the findings emanating from the literature review, synopsis of significant findings of this empirical study, conclusions, recommendations, avenues for further research, limitations of the study and concluding remarks.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 presented the orientation of the study. It presented the background of the study wherein I explained that this study emanated from my interest in women's issues and the findings of the Unisa WIR Audit Survey of 2008 commissioned by the Unisa Research Directorate and conducted by Unisa's Bureau of Market Research (BMR). It was explained (see section 1.2) that the primary objective of the WIR audit was to conduct a research study to establish the position, levels of skills and expertise, and needs of women researchers at Unisa. The audit revealed that the majority of participants in the Unisa WIR Audit Survey of 2008 were White academic women. The non-participation or omission of Black women academics in that audit encouraged me to investigate the factors that impacted on the lives of Black women academic researchers at Unisa, hence the research question formulated was: *What factors impact on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa?* Four sub-questions emanated from the research question:



- What are the challenges that Black women academic researchers experience in the teaching and learning at Unisa?
- What are the research experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa?
- How have these researchers experienced the mentoring programme at Unisa?
- What programmes does Unisa have in place to accelerate the development of the academic staff?

In line with the above research questions, I provided the broad research aim and the objectives of the study (see Section 1.4 and Section 5.1). The problem statement was presented (see Section 1.2) and it was pointed out that research has emerged as the most significant performance area in all universities (Tsikana, 2007: 28). It was important that Black women academic researchers engage in research activities and do not lag behind. A brief outline of qualitative research was given in Section 1.5.1.2. The study was located in the interpretive research paradigm because I am of the view that reality is multi-layered and therefore, different individuals view life from different angles (see Section 1.5.1.1). I opined that various participants would share different personal experiences about each research questions. The narrative inquiry research method was suitable because it enabled a dialogical and collaborative process between the researcher and the participants (see Section 1.5.1.3). Phenomenological in-depth interviews (see Section 1.5.2.2) were regarded as appropriate tools for data collection. I aimed to gather personal experiences about the academic lives of Black women academic researchers at Unisa. The narratives presented in Chapter 4 (see section 4.4) contained the participants' perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation and evidence was indicated by verbatim quotations derived from their own words. The data analysis process was explained in Section 1.5.2.3, while ethical matters were dealt with in Section 1.5.2.5.

Section 1.6 gave definitions of the core concepts of lived experience, Black women, academic, research and researcher as the core concepts found in this study. Lived experiences as a central concept were defined as personal knowledge that is gained

through first-hand involvement in everyday events (A dictionary of media communications, 2011:1). In section 1.6 the outline of chapter division was presented.

Chapter 2 paid attention to the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study, the conceptual framework and literature review. The theoretical frameworks identified and discussed were gender schema, sociocultural and Africana womanism theories. Gender schema (see Section 2.3.1) was explained as a network of cognitive structures formed during childhood. It was further explained that it influences the manner in which an individual perceives the self, other people and situations (Schurink, 2009:86) and how these perceptions are later realised in a particular environment in which the child grows up.

That indicated the meeting point between gender schema and the sociocultural theory. The sociocultural theory was discussed in Section 2.3.2. It was explained that the community and culture in which a person grows up plays a significant role in the process of meaning-making (McLeod, 2014:2). The perceptions formed during childhood are carried over to the workplace and later in adult life. In the case of this study, the perceptions about the self and other people are carried over to academia. For example, if a man grew up with the perception that a woman's place was in the kitchen, he would expect a woman academic to assume a tea girl's role in the academy (see Section 2.3.2.1). Africana womanism (see Section 2.3,3) was an appropriate framework because the study investigated the experiences of Black women academic researchers. Africana womanism was explained as an ideology that was designed for the welfare of women of African descent because it is grounded in African culture (Hudson-Weems in Pellerin, 2012:76).

A literature review looked at the experiences of Black women academic researchers from two Western countries; the US (see Section 2.3.1.1) and UK (see Section 2.3.1.2) and from African universities in East Africa, West Africa and South Africa. Literature from the Western universities revealed the marginalisation (see Section 2.3.1.1) of Black women academics that continuously reminded them that they were in spaces that were not meant for them. Mentoring came up as an essential need for the Black female faculty. Black women were also identified as mothering figures in Western

universities who were expected to 'mommy' their Black students. In the UK (see Section 2.3.1.2) racism came to the fore accompanied by gender bias in the ivory tower and misrecognition of Black women academics.

In African universities, it was revealed that Black women academics experienced racial and masculine alienation (see Section 2.3.2.1). Women researchers endured unfair working conditions (see Section 2.3.2.3). Inadequate academic support for women researchers was reported (see Section 2.3.2.2 and Section 2.3.2.3) and the fact that they needed academic networking because male academics excluded them from their networks. Academic spaces were male-dominated (see Section 2.3.2.2) and women were excluded from collaborative networks, hence they were clustered at the lower academic ranks because they lacked adequate qualifications.

Another common finding was that Black women academics were perceived as 'tea' girls in Zimbabwean universities (see Section 2.5.2.1), while in Ghanaian universities there was a firm belief that the place of a woman was in the kitchen (see Section 2.3.2.2) because women were culturally viewed as appendices to their husbands. They had to carry out the roles that they performed at their homes in the academy. Women academics were expected to act as mothers to Black students (see Section 2.5.2.1 and Section 2.3.2.3). In addition to being academic mothers, they carried heavy teaching loads (see Section 2.3.2.2 and Section 2.3.2.3) and these coupled with traditional culture were seen as impediments to the academic advancement of Black women academics (see Section 2.3.2.3).

Chapter 3 dealt with research design and methodology. The study was located in the interpretive paradigm (see Section 3.3.1) because the researcher's underlying belief was and still is that people view life from different angles and, therefore, there are multiple realities. The characteristics of qualitative research approach were discussed (see Section 3.3.2) as a suitable approach for this study because it encouraged the studying of the phenomena in its natural setting and it enabled the researcher to obtain rich data from the participants. The qualitative narrative inquiry method (see Section 3.3.3) was explained in detail as an investigative tool that is used in studies of educational experience. It enabled the participants to share their stories and it enabled

meaningful conversations between the researcher and the participants. Methods to collect data (see Section 3.4.2.2, 3.4.2.3 3 and 4.2.4) were in-depth interviews, digital voice recorder and field notes of shared experience. Explanation on how data analysis would be done was given (see Section 3.4.3). Issues of measures of trustworthiness (see Section 3.5) and ethical issues (see Section 3.5.5) were also attended to.

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings according to the themes that emerged from the data collected (see Section 4.4). Verbatim quotations from the participants were used to indicate that the meanings attached to the themes were based on the words of the participants. At the end of each theme, a discussion was made (see Sections 4.4.1.1 to 4.4.4.4) where each theme was linked to literature or to the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. The following themes were identified:

- No sense of ownership of modules
- Need for orientation in the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers
- Black women academics' qualifications were questionable
- Racism and alienation of new lecturers by both White and Black staff who have long been at Unisa
- More training in postgraduate supervision
- More training in article writing
- Inadequate supervision of participants' personal studies
- Dissatisfaction with the 2010 mentorship programme
- Commendation of the 2016 mentorship programme of the CEDU
- The brown bag seminars
- The AQIP
- The Young Academics Leadership Programme
- Need for programmes to cater for academic staff over 50 years of age.

Chapter 5 provided the summary of the whole study (see Section 5.2). A synopsis of the research findings was divided into two sections: a synopsis of findings from literature (see Section 5.3.1) and a synopsis of findings from this empirical study see Section 5.3.2). The conclusions derived from the empirical findings were discussed as

answers to the research questions (see Section 5.4). The chapter further gave recommendations (see Section 5.5) and avenues for future research (see Section 5.6), limitations of the study (see Section 5.7) and concluding remarks (see Section 5.8).

### **5.3 SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The summary of findings is divided into two sections. The first part gives a synopsis of the findings from the literature review and the second part gives the synopsis of the findings of this empirical study.

#### **5.3.1 Synopsis of findings from the literature review**

Chapter 2 dealt with a literature review. It looked at the experiences of Black women academic researchers from two Western countries: the US and the UK. In Africa, research associated with universities in East Africa, West Africa and South Africa was reviewed.

Literature from the Western countries revealed that Black women researchers were still marginalised in the academy. They continuously faced ‘chilly and unwelcoming’ working conditions that reminded them that they were in spaces that were not meant for them (see Section 2.3.1.1). The unwelcoming environment reminded Black women academics that they were outsiders within the institutions that alienated them. The outsider-within status was described as a situation that Black women academics experienced when they found themselves in situations where they were not recognised as part of the mainstream (Collins, 1986 in Hinton, 2009:2009-395). They lacked academic support and were in great need of mentoring that would help close the gap that existed between them and their male counterparts (Tillman, 2012: 124) and see Section 2.3.11). Black women academics served as mentors to Black female students and embraced gendered roles of being academic mothers who had to ‘mommy’ their Black students (Hirshfield & Joseph: 2012: 22; see Section 2.3.1.1). In the UK universities, racism occurred (see Section 2.5.1.2) and this racism was accompanied by misrecognition of Black women academics in the midst of White female academics in the same research sites. In addition, gender bias existed in UK universities with

regard to discrimination concerning access to funding for Black women academics. Scholars such as Easterly and Ricard (2011: 64) (also see Section 2.3.1.2) firmly believed that such discrimination was related to gender schema that consisted of beliefs that limited the understanding of what women could achieve. The scholars highlighted that in the UK, cases of unconscious bias and gender schemas in academia were plentiful.

In African universities Black women academics faced racial and sexist segregation (see Section 2.3.2.1). Literature revealed that the University of Zimbabwe had the worst White-dominated institutional culture that was masculinist and exclusionary of Black women academics. Black women academics voluntarily assumed roles of tea girls and served tea to the senior male academics in return for academic guidance. This role was consistent with the expected gender roles that women play in society. This role reminded women academics that the place of a woman was in the kitchen (Gaidzanwa, 2007: 63; see Section 2.3.2 and Section 2.3.2.2).

Women academics had to be mothers at home and at work and still cope with academic work. At the University of Ghana, literature revealed that women academics were faced with Black masculinity because Ghanaian universities aimed at creating modern African masculinities that would mark the academy as a powerful male space. The 'mothering' of students emerged again in Ghanaian universities. Women academics had to carry out domestic roles in the academy and take care of Black students as their own children. This was viewed as the transference of maternalism into the workplace and it placed an unnecessary burden on women academics (Gaidzanwa, 2007: 75 and see Section 2.3.1.1). The issue of inadequate support for women researchers also arose. In Ghanaian universities, there was subtle gender discrimination in terms of opportunities for grant scholarships and fellowship for further training (see Section 2.3.2.2). In Nigerian universities, it appeared that women academics were not in possession of doctorate degrees because they played multiple roles and were faced with heavy teaching loads (Yusuf, 2014: 284; see Section 2.3.2.2). The multiple roles that women played in African universities impeded their academic development.

It also came to the fore that there was a lack of female mentors and that Black women academics had a problem with academic networking because too much networking was viewed as a deviant behaviour. In South Africa, literature confirmed that women academics had to endure discriminatory conditions in the academic workspace (see Section 2.3.2.3). Lack of support from senior colleagues was also reported by Mabokela (2002:19). Senior colleagues were reported to be unwilling to assist the novice women academics and left them to find their way on their own and women academics also had to endure heavy teaching loads. Culture was also cited to be an impediment to the academic mobility of Black women academics. Women found themselves having to assume submissive roles in academia (Mabokela, 2002:198; see Section 2.3.2.3).

### **5.3.2 Synopsis of findings from this empirical study**

In the teaching and learning area, it emerged from this study that Black women academic researchers had no sense of ownership for the modules that were allocated to them. Most participants lamented that by 2016, most of them had more than five years at Unisa but had never been primary lecturers. They were all secondary lecturers and had to carry out instructions and work according to terms set by the module primary lecturers who were White professors. As secondary lecturers, they could not make meaningful contributions to the running of the modules (see Section 4.4.1.1). Most participants expressed a need of orientation in the teaching of ODL modules. When started work at Unisa, they experienced challenges with the setting of assignment and examination questions and the writing of tutorial letters (see Section 4.4.1.2). Black women academics' qualifications were questioned by White colleagues who continuously asked them where they graduated and where they came from (see Section 4.4.1.3). Racism and alienation was reported to have come from both White and Black staff who have long been at Unisa (see Section 4.4.1.3). Racism reminded the participants that South Africa has a history of apartheid.

In the research area, three themes arose. There was a need for more training for postgraduate supervision (see Section 4.4.2.1) because most participants shared that they had not supervised any postgraduate students to completion. More need for

training in article writing was also established (see Section 4.4.2.3). Participants found difficulties in publishing their articles. Participants who were still studying to complete their doctorate degrees complained about inadequate supervision in their personal research studies (see Section 4.4.2.2). They pointed out the lack of communication with their supervisors and that supervisors took long to provide feedback.

Concerning mentorship, at Unisa, the participants expressed dissatisfaction about the 2010 mentorship programme. Mentors did not have a proper schedule for what that mentorship programme had to cover (see Section 4.3.3.1). However, participants expressed great satisfaction with the CEDU 2016 mentorship programme (Section 4.3.3.1) because it is led by NRF rated researchers.

With regard to the programmes that Unisa has established to accelerate development of academic staff, there was a commendation for the brown bag seminars, the Young Academics Programme and the AQIP. Older participants above the age of 50 complained that they were prevented from participating in the current Unisa programmes because of their age (see Section 4.4.4.4.). They suggested that Unisa should not consider age a criterion to qualify for these programmes but it should consider the potential of the candidate.

### **5.3.3 Reflections on gender issues in academia**

The position of women has not changed much in terms of how the women academics are perceived in academia. Literature from Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria indicated that no matter how well women are educated, their rightful place is seen as the kitchen (see Section 2.5.2.1. and 2.5.2.2). In Zimbabwe, women had to assume the role of tea girls and in Ghanaian universities, married women academics were viewed as appendices to their husbands. Senior Black male academics expected them to display the traditional codes of respect towards them (see Section 2.5.2.2) and too much networking was viewed as bad behaviour. In Western universities in the US and the UK as well as in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana, Black women faculty were viewed as academic mothers who had to mommy and mentor their Black students. This was the realisation of the gender schema formed during childhood that a woman is a



childminder. Even at university, women academics were expected to nurture their students and such responsibilities were not placed on male academics to nurture the male students. Easterly and Ricard (2011:64) and section 2.5.1.2 explain that this form of discrimination is related to gender schema and it displays the beliefs which limit the potential of women.

There were stereotypes in Ghanaian communities that educated women were not marriageable and they could not cook well (see Section 2.3.2.2). Such stereotypes were an indication of cultural stereotypes that have permeated academia. Vygotsky as cited by Scott and Palinscar (2013) and section 2.3. 2 refer to the genetic law of development. The child's development first occurs on the social plane between people in the culture. Secondly, cultural development appears in the psychological plane. The child grows up in a specific society and associates the female species with the kitchen and child rearing. Thus, male academics viewed women academics as tea girls and academic mothers. All these perceptions about women were formed during childhood.

Women still faced gender discrimination in academia. Neither Black male academics nor White women could help. The participants mentioned White women professors who alienated them because they believed that they owned the modules that they taught for more than ten to 15 years (see Section 4.4.1.1). Ideologies such as Africana womanism as coined by Hudson-Weems (in Pellerin, 2012:76) and section 2.3.3 were meant to free Black women from all kinds of oppressive behaviour. The participants in this study were all Black women who defined their standpoint in their various communities and pursued education to make their lives better. They appeared to be strong Black women who have withstood and overcome many challenges in academia and at Unisa. They are at Unisa to change lives of their fellow South Africans, whether Black, Indian, White or Coloured because Unisa has students from all races. Africana womanism caters for all sexes and races; hence the Africana womanism was suitable for exploring the phenomenon that was investigated.

Based on the findings of this study, Black women academics still have a long road ahead of them. There is still a wide gap between them and their Black male

counterparts, their White female counterparts and their White male counterparts. Black women academics need to form collaborations and work together to move forward.

#### **5.3.4 Reflections on the theoretical frameworks used in this study: Africana womanism, gender schema and the sociocultural theory**

Africana womanism was selected because it was a relevant theory concerning the investigation of the lived experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa. Pellerin (2012: 76-77) described Africana womanism aptly and stated that it “embraces the concept of collectivism for the entire family in its overall liberation struggle for survival.” In this study, the findings revealed that the Black women academics at Unisa survived difficult circumstances such as the questioning of their qualifications (see Section 4.4.1.3); they were denied opportunities of being primary lecturers (see Section 4.4.1.1), and they withstood racism and alienation by both Black and White staff that have long been at Unisa (see section 4.4.1.4).

They stood up to Black male supervisors who derailed their academic progress and requested to change the supervisors (see Section 4.4.2.3). The participants were vocal on issues that they felt undermined Black academics in general such as the questioning of their qualifications (see Section 4.4.1.3). Participant 2 made her assertions inclusive. She said Black academics and not Black women academics. The participants in this study displayed strong qualities of the Africana women described by Clenora Weems (in Naemeka: in Irele, 1995: 82) when she says:

*“Long before the advent of feminism, Black women were active. Therefore when I think of strong Black women from the Africa, from the total diaspora. I never think of them as feminists, because I know what feminism means to me, I know it means to get back.”*

The findings indicated that White women professors protected their territory as primary lecturers and few were mentioned to have given academic support to their Black women counterparts.

The findings also displayed that gender schema was a relevant theory to this research because participants attested to the fact that some Black male supervisors turned them down in their studies. Participant 3 narrated how her Black male supervisor prohibited her from submitting her study after she had written eight chapters. She was told that she was not ready to submit (see Section 4.4.2.3 page 126). The supervisor did not want to recognise her potential.

Gender Schema according to Johnson (2009: 3) refers to the network of cognitive organisation in one's mind in terms of how one views oneself, other people, and men or women in a particular culture. Sociocultural theory is also applicable in this situation. Vygotsky in Scott and Palinscar (2013 1) describe the genetic law of development which relates to the child's development which occurs among people in the cultural environment. In African cultures, women are unequal to men. The Black male professor grew up in a culture that perceived women as subordinate to men. This was also revealed by the literature review where Prah (2002:3) observed that Black women academics in Ghana were viewed as appendices to their husbands and not as equal to Black male academics. The traditional African stereotypes impeded the academic development of women. Mabokela (2002:198) confirmed that this practice occurred in South African universities too.

#### **5.4 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS: RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The conclusions arrived at in this study were stated as answers to the primary research question and sub-questions (see Section 1.3.1) which was: *What factors impact on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa?* The research questions were:

- What are the challenges that Black women academic researchers experience in the teaching and learning at Unisa?
- What are the research experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa?

- How have these researchers experienced the mentoring programme at Unisa?
- What programmes does Unisa have in place to accelerate the development of the academic staff?

The conclusions are discussed below as responses to the above questions.

#### **5.4.1 What are the challenges that Black women academic researchers experience in the teaching and learning at Unisa?**

The responses of the participants revealed that they had no sense of ownership for the modules that they were allocated. After having been at Unisa for more than five years, all the participants were still secondary lecturers. They could not make meaningful contributions because they had to operate in terms stipulated by the primary lecturers who were mostly White professors. A need for the orientation in the teaching of ODL modules for novice lecturers arose. The participants experienced challenges in the teaching and learning area specifically with the setting of examination questions because their questions were rejected by primary lecturers and did not appear in the final question papers. Thus feelings of disempowerment arose. Participants also revealed that their qualifications were questioned by some of the old Unisa staff and to them, such questions communicated the message that they were not good enough to be at Unisa. Participants complained about racism, alienation and non-welcoming attitude by both White and Black staff that have been long at Unisa (see Section 4.4.1.4).

#### **5.4.2 What are the research experiences of the Black women academic researchers at Unisa?**

There was a need for more training in postgraduate supervision and in article writing. Some participants had not produced any postgraduate students while they had been at Unisa for more than five years. Difficulties in publishing articles were cited. Coupled with publication was the quest for information about accredited journals because some participants had published in non-accredited journals. Participants at Unisa

experienced inadequate supervision in their own studies. Issues of non-communication delayed feedback and relationship break-down in the relationship with supervisors were highlighted.

#### **5.4.4 What have these researchers experienced about the mentoring programme at Unisa?**

Dissatisfaction with the Unisa 2010 mentorship programme which had no proper guidelines was reported. Some participants reported that they never had meetings with their mentors but they received certificates of participation in that programme. Some participants had a good experience and shared that their mentors supported them in their personal research studies and article writing. Most participants commended the 2016 CEDU mentorship programme. They commended the knowledge of the NRF rated researchers who are their mentors in this programme.

#### **5.4.4 What programmes does Unisa have in place to accelerate the development of the academic staff?**

The CEDU brown bag seminars were commended by all the participants as avenues that catered for the academic development of staff who were doing postgraduate studies. The Young Academics Leadership Programme and the AQIP Programme were also highly commended by the participants who were below the age of 45. The participants who were above the age of 50, however, were not pleased by the age factor that is used as a criterion to qualify for the existing programmes at Unisa. There was a recommendation that Unisa should design programmes that will cater to the academics over the age of 50.

### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

### **5.5.1 The recommendation for the teaching and learning area**

Recommendation 1: Allocation of novice lecturers as primary lecturers of modules CEDU should allocate novice lecturers the responsibility of being primary lecturers of the modules allocated to them at least after a period of two years. Previous primary lecturers could act as mentors because the findings revealed that the participants who have been at Unisa for more than five years have never been primary lecturers. This should be viewed as a skills transfer exercise that would make novice lecturers feel that they have a say and meaningful contribution in the modules.

Recommendation 2: Designing and implementation of an orientation programme for novice lecturers in the teaching of ODL modules. CEDU should design and implement an orientation programme for its new staff. Such a programme would include tuition matters and pay attention to aspects such as the content of the study guides, writing tutorial letters, setting of assignments and examination questions and marking of assignments and examination papers and most importantly it should also pay attention on how to write the comments and the feedback to students. The orientation programme could also include aspects of cultural tolerance and cultural diversity at Unisa. Unisa has had a multiracial staff component ever since it was established. However, in 2016 the participants felt that there were issues of racism.

### **5.5.2 The recommendation in the research area**

Recommendation 3: More training in the supervision of postgraduate students and in article writing CEDU should continue to provide more training for postgraduate supervision and for article writing. Currently, the college runs workshops that deal with these two research aspects. To be included in these workshops is the information on how to write feedback to postgraduate students in a way that the feedback could be easily understood. This could help on the part of the student who can easily effect whatever changes and suggestions that are recommended by the supervisor without having to go back to the supervisor get more clarification on the feedback. The supervisor's workshop can also include aspects of the interpersonal relationship

between the supervisor and the student and also address issues of co-publishing between the supervisor and the student.

CEDU should do more article writing workshops for new researchers who should be shown how to publish articles from their master's dissertations or doctoral theses. Information about predatory journals, about the weight of a research article published in an accredited journal and article published in a book, should form part of the workshop.

Recommendation 4: Allocation of postgraduate students to supervisors who have specialised in the same discipline as the student. CEDU should allocate postgraduate students to supervisors who have specialised in the same discipline in which the student is researching. One participant revealed that she had to change supervisors because she realised, after having completed eight chapters of her thesis, that her supervisor was not from the same discipline as hers.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations regarding programmes that Unisa have in place to accelerate development of academic staff**

Recommendation 5: Introduction of new academic programmes for staff over 50 years

Unisa should look into introducing programmes that could cater for academic staff who are above the age of 50. The present programmes cater for academics below the age of 45. Academics above 50 years felt that they were not appreciated anymore yet Unisa still makes use of retired professors for their skills. The participants who were over 50 years also expressed that they needed to be appreciated and catered for in terms of academic programmes.

## **5.6 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Future research could look into orientation programmes for new academic lecturers at Unisa. The findings from this study suggested that the programme could, among other things, include the following: Teaching and learning in an ODL institution; cultural

tolerance and cultural diversity in institutions of higher learning; and an investigation of the experiences of women managers at Unisa.

### **3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitation of this study was that it aimed at a larger sample which included Black women professors. However, the researcher had to be content with the number of participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in her study. If more senior professors participated, richer insights could have been drawn from the data.

### **3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As a Black woman academic lecturer at Unisa, I have learned a number of things from this research. I learned to respect and understand other peoples' choices and decisions and to accept them. I learned that one can plan to achieve certain things in life but things may not work out the way one has planned them and that one must accept that. I requested Black women academic professors to participate in this study because I wanted to learn from their academic journeys but none of them responded to the request. I had to be content with the participants who voluntarily agreed to share their academic experiences with me.

I have learned to respect those who have volunteered to take part in this study because they have contributed to the success of another fellow Black woman. They have made me grow in my academic career and they have taught me that sharing one's time and knowledge with someone is the most valuable thing a person can do. I enjoyed the conversations with the participants. I was enriched by the academic experiences shared and realised that without perseverance, nothing can be achieved. I have learned to respect people's views and choices and the fact that individuals do not view life through the same lenses.



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## APPENDIX A: PROOF OR REGISTRATION



1028

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 2017-10-16

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: **BED (COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION) (08417)**

CODE	DUPLEX	N NAME OF STUDY UNIT	TOP credits	LANG.	PROFESIONAL EXAMINATION	EXOM.DATB	CERTIFS(PLACE)
EXCED05		EDU - Comprehensive Education	12	E			

You are referred to the 'MyRegistration' brochure regarding fees that are expected on cancellation of any study units.


To avoid cancellation of your registration or examination entry and forfeiting your minimum initial payment, you must submit the following to the Registrar (Admission) by return of mail:

1. A copy of your identity document, passport or birth certificate reflecting your full names and date of birth. The copy must be certified by a Commissioner of Oaths and bear the Commissioner's stamp. A foreign student may have the document certified by a SA Embassy, Consulate, High Commission, Trade Mission or Public Notary. Please note that fax/scanned copies or copies of certified copies are not acceptable.


2. Your study material is available on [www.my.unisa.ac.za](http://www.my.unisa.ac.za), as no printed matter will be made available for the research proposal module. Study material can be accessed on the Unisa website. You must register on MyUnisa (<http://www.unisa.ac.za/postal/>) for this purpose. You are also reminded to activate your myUnisa email address since all electronic correspondence will be sent to this email address.

BALANCE ON STUDY ACCOUNT: 0.00

Yours faithfully,

  
 Prof OM Torrance  
 Registrar (Acting)

0115 6 03 0



University of South Africa  
 Private Bag 2750, Roseburg, 2018  
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 Telephone: +27 11 251 29 11, Fax: +27 11 251 29 11  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

## **APPENDIX B: LETTER REQUESTING TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UNISA**

University of South Africa

10 September 2014

### **TITLE: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.**

Prof RM Phakeng

Theo van Wyk Building, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 10-05

Vice Principal: Research and Innovation

Tel: (012) 429 2851

Dear Prof Phakeng

I, Khabonina Grace Nkumane, am doing research with Prof MP van Niekerk a professor in the Department of Educational Foundations towards a MEd degree at the University of South Africa. We have applied for the MDSP funding in order to get funds to assist with the payments for language editing, the transcription of interviews, making copies and the binding of the copies for the study. We are inviting you to participate in the study entitled: Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa.

The aim of the study is to investigate factors impacting on the academic life of Black women academic researchers at Unisa and to determine strategies that can be developed to enhance their participation in and experience of research in order to promote women's research as well as identify ways in which Unisa can become a better environment for them to conduct research.

Our institution has been selected because it is the research site where the research is going to be conducted.

The study will entail unstructured phenomenological interviews or narratives of Black women academic researchers at the College of Education. The sample size will consist of six Black women academic researchers with varying years of teaching or lecturing experience. Purposive sampling will be used. Two lecturers with 15-20 years of experience, two with 10-15 years and the last two with 5-10 years of teaching experience at Unisa. Data will be collected from the participants by means of unstructured individual face-to-face interviews. A voice recorder will be used for

recording purposes in order to capture the data in a more reliable manner. Field notes will be taken as an active recording of a narrative between the researcher and the participant.

The benefits of this study will be multiple such as making the institution aware of the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers pertaining to the obstacles they face both in their personal capacities and at Unisa and strategies for supporting them to improve and increase their research outputs.

No potential risks are envisaged. I will state to participants that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time if they so wish. If they choose to participate in this study I will also inform them that they will remain anonymous. At the completion of the transcription of the interviews, I will also show the participant the transcribed interview in order to ensure trustworthiness. There are no known or anticipated risks in this study.

Feedback will entail a short report of the main findings that will be sent to the Senate Research Committee.

Yours sincerely

.....

Dr KG Nkumane

Senior Lecturer.

Unisa: Department of Language Education, Arts and Culture

**APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**UNISA**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

This is to certify that the application for ethical clearance submitted by

KG Nkumane [4726480]  
for a MEd study entitled

Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa has met the ethical requirements as specified by the University of South Africa College of Education Research Ethics Committee. This certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'VIMcKay'.

Prof VIMcKay  
Acting Executive Dean  
Unisa  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. M. Nkomo'.

2014 · 11 · 21

## **APPENDIX D: RESEARCH PERMISSION SUB-COMMITTEE OF SRIHDC**

23 September 2015

**A study titled: “Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa.”**

**Principal Investigator:**

**Dr. Grace Nkumane**

College of Education (012)

429-8713

nkumakg@unisa.ac.za

Supervisor : Prof M. P. van Niekerk

079 560 1015 vniekmp@unisa.ac.za

Your application regarding permission to conduct research involving Unisa students and data in respect of the above study has been received and was considered by the Research Permission Sub-committee (RPSC) of the Unisa Senate Research and Innovation and Higher Degrees Committee (SRIHDC) on 22 September 2015.

It is my pleasure to inform you that permission has been granted for the study. You may gain access to the email addresses of Unisa female academic researchers through the gate keeping assistance of your supervisor and invite them to participate voluntarily in your research study.

You are requested to submit a report of the study to the Research Permission Sub-committee

(RPSC@unisa.ac.za) within 12 months of completion of the study.

The personal information made available to the researcher(s)/gatekeeper(s) will only be used for the advancement of this research project as indicated and for the purpose as described in this permission letter. The researcher(s)/gatekeeper(s) must take all appropriate precautionary measures to protect the personal information given to him/her/them in good faith and it must not be passed on to third parties.

*Note:*

*The reference number **2015\_RPSC\_88** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants and the Research Permission Sub-committee.*

We would like to wish you well in your research undertaking.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

**PROF L LABUSCHAGNE**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH**

***Tel:*** +27 12 429 6368 / 2446

## **APPENDIX E: AN INVITATION LETTER TO THE Unisa STAFF TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW**

This is an invitation letter, inviting you to consider participating in a research study, I, Khabonina Grace Nkumane (472 648 0) am conducting a research for an MEd Degree in Comparative Education at the College of Education at Unisa. The title of the research study is titled: "Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa". I have obtained ethical clearance (Reference number: 2014 OCTOBER/4726480/MC) and the permission conduct research involving Unisa staff (Reference number: #2015\_RPSC\_088).

I would like to have your views and opinions on this topic. The information will be used to improve research experiences and or conditions of Black women academic researchers at Unisa hence their academic and research experiences should be well documented.

The objectives of the study are to elicit the experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa with an aim of presenting these experiences in the form of narratives for the research. The research is conducted under the interpretive paradigm because the intention is to understand the world of human experience.

The main research question in this study is:

*What factors impact on the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa?*

Sub-questions are:

1. What are the challenges that Black women academic researchers' experience at Unisa?
2. What is the impact of these challenges in the academic development of Black women academic researchers at Unisa?
3. What coping strategies do Black women academic researchers use to cope with their challenges at Unisa?
4. What other roles do Black women academic researchers play and how do these roles impact on the academic career?
5. What strategies can Unisa implement to enhance the experiences of Black academic women researchers?

As a participant, your safety and anonymity will be safeguarded throughout the study and the information you offer will be treated as confidential. The data gathered will be used specifically for this study and disposed thereafter by deleting computer files and audio-taped interviews, deleting the e-mail communication, shredding all paper-based files and burning cassettes.

Your choice not to participate in the study will not disadvantage you in any way, if you choose to participate you at liberty to withdraw at any stage without having to provide any reason.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (012) 429-8713 or by e-mail at: [Nkumakg@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Nkumakg@unisa.ac.za). For further queries regarding this research study, kindly contact my research supervisor, Prof MP van Niekerk, [Vniekmp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Vniekmp@unisa.ac.za)

I look forward to speaking with you very much and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form which follows on the next page.

-----  
KG Nkumane (472 648 0)

-----  
Date



## APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the study of the: *Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa*. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and add any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous. I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (Please print):

Participant Signature:

Researcher Name: (Please print)

Researcher Signature:

Date:

## **APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Title of study: *Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa.***

These are the questions that form part of my M Ed study entitled: Lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa, at the University of South Africa.

The aim of the study is to investigate lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa.

### **A. TEACHING**

1. How many years have you been teaching at Unisa?
2. How many modules are you involved in? What is your role in this module (co-ordinator)?
3. Do you know the number of students in each module?
4. How do you cope with the marking of assignments?
5. Do you enjoy teaching these modules? Why?
6. How do you solve student queries?
7. What type of student queries do you get?
8. Are there any teaching tasks that you do not like? Why?
9. What other tasks do you do related to teaching?

### **B. RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION**

10. How many articles (and or other research output) do you produce a year?
11. Is this number your target or do you have a different target? Explain.
12. You write the articles in English, how has this helped you to excel in writing articles or not?
13. How many Masters and doctoral students do you supervise?
14. Do you find the supervision easy? Explain.
15. What other research related activities are involved in? (e.g. community engagement).

16. Are these other activities helping to improve your research output? Explain

**C. MENTORSHIP**

17. Are you a mentee?
18. Has the mentorship programme helped you to grow as a scholar? Explain
19. Does the mentorship programme help you with your teaching tasks? Explain
20. Does the mentorship programme help you with your research activities? Explain
21. Has it enabled you to publish an article? Explain

**D. ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

22. Are there any academic support programmes at Unisa to help with academic development?
23. Do you find these programmes helpful concerning research?
24. What kind of other support do you need in order to publish more articles?
25. What kind of other duties do you perform except teaching and research?
26. Do you enjoy these duties? Explain
27. What makes you happy in your job? Why

## APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW 2

Q: Good morning colleague.

A: Morning.

Q: Thank for agreeing to this interview. I really appreciate it. I am just here to talk to you about my MEd research study. The title is: the lived experiences of Black women academic researchers at the University of South Africa. But before I start I am more interested in you telling me about your schooling experience, where were you born, where did you go to school, maybe from primary, high school until university. Just to share those experiences.

A: I was born in Mamelodi, in 1976, to be exact but I grew up in Garankuwa, north of Pretoria. I went to school from primary to high school in Garankuwa. After high school I went to University of Pretoria that was where I did my BEd degree. I did my Masters as well at UP and then I did my PhD at St Augustin college. So I grew up in a township, you know I am a township girl. I didn't think there was any problem even when I went to University, you know I took my township girl thing with me to the University. For me it was a kind of a nice experience because it was taking me out of my comfort zone in the township into a university environment where I actually enjoyed myself. Since 1995 because I did my research for my BEd degree in 1995. So, ja, so I think I enjoyed my tertiary education at UP. I actually fell in love with the University because I came out as somebody who enjoyed, working, studying at a University and it was quite different from whatever I had experienced then.

Q: Thank you very much. Is there anything that you want to say concerning your lecturers at UP since you enjoyed it? How did you find your male lecturers and your female lecturers? Which gender supported you the most? Was it the males or the female lecturers?

A: You know, I think UP, because it was one of and it still is regarded as one of the previously advantaged universities, the so called white university. When I was there initially, it was still a race based institution, dominated by Afrikaans. So you know although I enjoyed teaching because I was enjoying education. I had to do school subjects and most of my lecturers were of course, were both male and female. They were both English and Afrikaans. Some of the courses that I chose were actually in Afrikaans and I couldn't cope. It was really challenging but I think in terms of the support system that I got, I think I got more support from my female lecturers, but I

wouldn't say completely, because I remember during my first degree, that was 1999, you know you used to have this rude Afrikaans male lecturer, who used to say to, I will not mention his name, but I still remember he used to be proud that people didn't pass his module. You know, and we used to be so worried because some of us, from the township you expected that when you know, went to university you would not really have a smooth ride but you expected that you were going to pass and get a degree and make your family proud. And when you came across things like that, you actually became frightened and thought, am I really going to get my degree, you know. But I even had to do African Languages for my BEd degree, as you know, as a teacher you were expected to speak one of the languages. I was doing Setswana and there I had brilliant lecturers, both male and female they were brilliant and they were supporting me. I had English as well as a language, and I had female lecturers who were brilliant, although English 101 was very difficult, you know the poems and literature and all that, it was difficult, but they were always encouraging us, you know, it was only this white education lecturer who was always saying, you are not going to make it. The assignments were difficult, I don't even know that you are going to pass it, the first assignment. But you know, generally my experience was good because I think I did well as a student. You know I was not a 50% student. I got distinctions because of the support that I got from both female and male lecturers, but my only worry, especially my first year was the Afrikaans language, because I couldn't cope. I was doing Geography, as a school subject, I had to drop it, because it was mainly in Afrikaans. But generally I would say my experience was well, it was good.

Q: Your story is nice, I am really enjoying it, but can I ask what is it that draw you into academia, how did you get into Unisa?

A: You know, I think going to University, I think maybe it would be an environment that I was exposed to. From high school, coming from a township, and going into University, you know for some of us it is a privilege that you are in an environment, a new environment and a university. Not everybody from a township gets into university. Then as you grow, I mean I did my first degree, a BA in Education and I went to my Honours, BA Ed, BEd, sorry, and when I did my BEd, you know I did an Honours degree, you know there was a lecturer, at the time, who was a doctor, who actually saw potential in me because I did well, I actually did my Honours in one year. Only 1999, I registered in January, I did everything, all the ten courses and I graduated at the end of 1999. I got all my courses, ten courses, and I graduated in 2001 and then I

registered for my MEd. So I think you know having felt that you were privileged to be exposed to a university environment, where you got knowledge because I regard that as a privilege. I got help from a professor who is now working at Potchefstroom University. I regarded him as my mentor, who held my hand and he was a male. He held my hand and said when I did my degree at that time, he was there holding my hand and said you are doing your Honours, you have to do your Masters he encouraged me to do my Masters. And I fell in love with being an academic because most of my friends were lecturers at that time, you know, and most of them were Black like me, so I was comfortable because I said if they were Black and they were academics, it meant it was possible with me too. So it happened that there was a time when a lady who was doing her doctorate, who was an assistant to this particular doctor was offered a position at UN, so she had to leave South Africa for two years and then she recommended me to take her position. So I worked with this doctor and then during my work with the doctor, I got to know about how exams were processed, how to set question papers, how academia runs, how to work with students who knew the system, how assignments were registered to markers, so I fell in love with academia and I thought to myself, you know, I chose teaching, and my teaching degree actually meant I had to go and teach in a high school, because I did a BA Ed in Arts and Education. So my aim was to go and teach at high school, but when I did my final year, in BEd, I went to a school in Mamelodi and there I got exposed to the township education because even Mamelodi was quite different from around here. Mamelodi is one of the townships around Pretoria, then I got exposed to that high school where I got to know about the fights of teachers at a school, where teachers fought for a man, where you know, learners fought because a teacher was involved with one learner, female educators were laughing at the situation. You got to experience petty things and I in my mind I thought that was not really an environment where I wanted to be in.

Q: So you wanted to go out of that situation?

A: I wanted to go out of that situation and in fact I did not only do my teaching practice in a township school.

Q: In a township school.

A: I went to a model C school, the former model C schools, you know I went to Eersterus, I went to CR Swart Hoërskool. Actually the environment in Mamelodi said to me you cannot in your life work in this environment. I didn't want to know whether I was working in an Afrikaans based or in an English based school or in a multilingual

school, but in my head I thought I saw the problems with the teachers and to me all I could do with my education was actually to develop those teachers. Hence I did my Masters and I also did my PhD. And my aim was to be a lecturer one day. So you know, the problems that I picked up from the people I worked with made me want to work here at Unisa.

Q: It was a sort of a motivation?

A: Of some type yes.

Q: When did you arrive at Unisa?

A: I joined Unisa in 2009, August, and I think I joined Unisa to teach certain modules at that time.

Q: I am more interested that you share a little bit about the modules that you taught at that time and whether you enjoyed them.

A: I was actually, you know I even remember my interview when I came here. I was actually interviewed for comparative education and I remember the position that was advertised in the newspaper. They wanted somebody with comparative education and social education and I think there was some word about history of education, you know, comparative and social education. So it was only one position, that was advertised and for me when I saw that I met the requirements. I did apply for it and I came here. I was told you know, since they didn't have many lecturers in comparative education I was going to be placed in comparative education. So I was in a way happy because I performed well, with my Honours at UP I actually got a distinction for all my comparative education especially in the Honours because like I told you I did it in a year. I went to do Masters. I actually got a distinction in my Masters in comparative education. So I was comfortable because I got a very good supportive female lecturer, who helped me as comparative education was difficult, because it was comparing teaching different cultures and you know you can imagine. It was never easy to compare that, some African and even different continent. African education system the USA and Europe and you know you got a very big book, you know and you had to read through everything and it was not even half of the chapters that we were asked to do and it was very difficult. I was actually happy when I came to Unisa. I got to teach comparative education and you know I was actually thrown in the deep end because most of the articles I had to actually source myself. I think I worked with brilliant people who were supporting me. Initially it was difficult because when you were new, people assumed you could do everything. You know, you worked with colleagues who thought

if they wanted somebody who could do the dirty work, they gave it to you because you were new and you had to say yes, because they thought you were not going to have the ability to do it. So but I think I enjoyed having to help with the compilation of the material because I had to come up with study material, you know some chapters and articles that would help the students and I think my exposure to using myUnisa was really something good because from where I came from, we never had, you know, distance education learners. Unisa was quite different because we have myUnisa and you know we had e-mails and that there was a chance that you won't see your students, but I think one of the things that I liked was the, what is those classes that we had to do?

Q: Group discussions.

A: Group discussions, you know. We had group discussions, where we met and spoke to our students which was fascinating because you go to the Eastern Cape, you went to Mpumalanga and met your students. It was quite nice, you know, but I think somehow you felt abused because there were people who would say they only wanted to go to Cape Town and Durban and they sent you to Umtata, they sent you to East London and distant places. They sent you to Polokwane, you know and you tend to do most and those people, the professors, they didn't want to go to the distant places. They only wanted to go to Cape Town and Durban you know, to go to the sea, or may be they wanted a holiday next to the beach, but you were abused instead of you doing two venues, you ended up doing five because they didn't want to go to Umtata's and the other venues. I am saying this because it was not your famous nice places where I went for group discussions, but in terms of students, that was where our concentration of students was. At that time we had big numbers, we had to send some people there, so, but you found that the professors didn't want to go there. And you ended up being abused because if you went to Polokwane, you had to go to Nelspruit, you had to go to Parow and East London and your full professors didn't want to go there, they chose where they wanted to go, they only wanted to do two avenues and that was enough.

Q: Maybe if you can just share with me, why do you think that the professors selected certain places, certain Unisa centres for the group discussions and not the other venues? I think there was this notion of you know, of people who chose posh places, places where you know, you would have good restaurants, places next to the sea, you could go and work and after work you relax in your hotel or you walked on the beach, everybody wanted to take that as some kind of a holiday you know. They took it as



some kind of a holiday. It was comfortable because you flew there and you didn't have to drive. When you went to Polokwane you had to sit for three, four hours in the car, driving to Polokwane. But when you went to Cape Town you flew, who didn't want to fly, and stay in a hotel next to the ocean. People wanted the posh life. As the title professor, people thought they deserved that and you as a new comer, you were in the lecturer level, you deserved to drive to Nelspruit.

Q: Still on the teaching and learning part. Did you have any challenges in the modules that you taught at that time? Did you get enough mentorship concerning the modules that you taught? Did you get any modules that were taught by a professor and they were given to you, how was the handover of those modules? Any challenges?

A: You know, actually when I started, I had comparative education and then I did teach with professors. It was a female and a male and they were actually very supportive if I can say that. I think, like I said earlier, somehow I felt abused because they would dump some of their things on me, you know, like checking myUnisa, doing this and that but I think in essence, I did get the support and I think the challenge was the assignment marking. The assignment marking was, you would be asked to take charge of the marking of the assignments. As a new person you didn't have knowledge of those things and you needed support. I felt that I was being, I was being abused. I was being told to do things that I didn't have knowledge of. I didn't have enough support. People expected me to jump in that was why I said in the beginning, you know, I was thrown in the deep end. You were thrown in a swimming pool and you didn't know how to swim and they said you will learn as you were in the swimming pool. And I felt some of the things, I cannot remember all of them, from the top of my head but I remember some of the things I was saying, like this because I was a new staff member. I was not comfortable but because I was glad that I was at Unisa. I had a job, I had to do that you know. There was another module, that I actually got, I think a year, two years after I got into Unisa. It was education law A full professor was actually in charge of the module and I think we had a personality clash. It was a female, and she was really a control freak, when she wanted me to do things she sent me an e-mail, do this and I had to respond immediately and I had to do that on her terms. You know, and I was not comfortable because of the way she was approaching me, the way she was talking, you know, and we ended having to clash because some of her e-mails I felt that they were very offensive. And I felt that I was not given enough support, you know from her and you know this..

Q: This was a white female?

A: A white female, at the time she was still an associate professor and I think there was this, because I actually got to understand that later, that at Unisa there was this thing of people wanting to own modules. And when you own a module, when somebody comes in, you thought that that person wanted to take over and you still wanted to, there was this thing that if you have been teaching the module for ten years, and you felt that it was your module, and you know, anybody who comes in, you want them to operate on your own terms. So this was the approach of that associate professor, who said you are not going to come in, then she started assessing me, do I know the module? You know, do I really fit in? Do I know education law. Where did I do my degree? You know, and all that. You know I was not feeling comfortable. There was an incident, a personal incident that I experienced, I think I told you where I had a car accident, I could not meet the due dates for the submission of tutorial letters and question papers. I was not in the office most of the time because I had to attend to fixing my car and all that. She could not understand that I could not submit those things and she sent me e-mails. I told her about my problems and she was not supportive at all. She could not understand why I could not deliver at the time and she reported me to the CoD at the time and you know, it became a very serious issue. And it gave me a bad name because you know, and my CoD was Black person, who actually understood you know and he actually said to me, you know when you work with these kind of people, where they felt they are in control of the module, they wanted to be in charge and they have been doing this for years, you are a stranger into the module and they wanted to test you and if you were not giving them what they want, to them it was like you were not doing the job. The CoD was very understanding and he gave me time and extension of submission.

Q: The CoD was a Black male.

A: Black male at the time and he was very supportive and gave me time and he understood my situation, and you know it didn't sit well with that female associate professor. The CoD was not doing anything about my case. I did my job, I did submit the question papers. I did give my part of the work and even after I did that she still said she was not happy with my work because and the quality of my questions were not to the set instruction. And I could sense that there was an underlying thing because she started wanting to know where I did my degrees and how I got to get to Unisa and all those things. Then I was not comfortable because I could sense that she was

starting to undermine me and saying to me that I actually didn't deserve to teach education law, and it was her module, she had to own it and she had to tell me what to do and what kind of questions to ask. You know.

Q: It is very interesting that there was this kind of relationship between white female lecturers and Black women lecturers. What do you think was the cause?

A: I don't know but I think it was the mentality of our white colleagues sometimes, you know I had a feeling when I started working at Unisa that Black academics were being undermined. You know when somebody started asking you, where did you get your degree, saying she was not happy with the quality of your questions. They are questioning your qualifications, they were questioning your integrity as an academic, they were questioning whether you deserved to be at Unisa or not. You know, and I think to a large extent it was about undermining your quality of education. And I think it has a history, a history of racism, of oppression, that was my own view. You can quote me, you know, the whole thing of Black and white still exists. We cannot avoid that. You are the Black person, you are inferior. I am a white person, I have been teaching this module for ten or 15 years and I know what I am doing, you don't know what you are doing because you are from a township school, you were from, although you were from Tukkies I didn't know what kind of people taught you. So I think it was just being undermined and thinking you were not as good enough as them. It happened in most cases where you found you were doing something but you were not told, you were told your questions were not good enough you know. There was a time when I was told my accent, I needed to do something about my accent because maybe people would not understand what I am saying. I am Black, I cannot do anything about it, as long as I speak English, my English is good enough for me to qualify as a lecturer. There was nothing like that, but you know your white will tell you that you are not good enough, sometimes they didn't tell you in your face but you read between the lines, you are a human being, you could assess what somebody was saying about you. Your integrity you were and were not being good enough for a particular module. So I think it has to do with, because I feel, or I felt at that time it was a racial issue that you know white people are better than Black people especially when you come in an environment where some people told themselves they own a particular module, ja, so when you come in, you want to come in with an approach and somebody said no, we don't do things this way, I have been doing it like that for the past 15 years. So you were being undermined because you were not allowed to think for yourself, you are

not allowed to bring good, different ideas to that module because someone had already said to herself that was my module, I do things my own way.

Q: Concerning the handing over of the modules, a sort of an orientation for new staff, when you are coming from outside, coming to teach at Unisa, can you suggest anything, or just recommend how can a new person be oriented into teaching the modules, like you said that you were thrown into the deep end. How can that be improved?

A: You know at Unisa teaching is quite different because you know, you work with students at a distance, but I think we need mentorship, direct mentorship, where people don't just say, you are appointed at Unisa, this is the module, there is the study material, just see what you do, because that was what was done to me. I think especially full professors, they need to mentor you into teaching and learning, mentorship doesn't have to end up with you writing an article, and the professor checking whether your research was good or not. But I think even with teaching and learning we need a full professor who can hold your hand and work with you step by step. You know and it was not only assignments, because that was what happened with me, not only assignments, not only one, because now you end up being an administrator of assignments instead of being a lecturer. So you need somebody to help you even with the content, you know, if it is comparative education, you need to have a meeting with full professors, to say in comparative education we look at these things and this is how we go about doing this, not just being given a text book and told if you experienced a problem you contact me, because that was what happened, you know and now you administer assignments, then they tell you to go the group discussion classes, the group discussions and you have to fend for yourself, but I think we need, the important thing here is that as much as we do the same thing with research, where a professor will look at your research article, the same thing must be done with teaching and learning. You sit down with your mentor for teaching and learning, you get into the module, they help you, they actually teach you the module, especially when you are coming from outside, because you don't know how things operate at Unisa. Each and every aspect of teaching a module, you should get a full professor, a mentor who could take your hand and walk with you through the work process.

Q: We just touched on the mentoring aspect. Were you ever involved in a mentorship programme where you were a mentee at a certain stage?

A: Yes, I was, I am actually still a mentee. My first experience was not really a very good one because I had this professor who was proud to say I have a mentee but she was not really doing anything. The mentoring that she was doing, was just to ask you a question. Do you experience problems? How can I help you? When it came to writing reports, she actually wanted to write the report and just put her name but in terms of the support, it was not enough you know. I don't think I got enough support because for her it was a bonus because working from home, you know we have this thing of professors working from home, it is a requirement at Unisa that as a professor working from home, you need to have a mentee. So she was actually very good in writing our names because it was me and a colleague of mine, writing our names on the report that I am mentoring [REDACTED] and so and so but when it came to the actual doing of the work, it was not really productive for me as a person because I would write an article, I would give it to her, it will take forever to come back to me and in terms of teaching and learning I was not getting any support. I was teaching with her in one of these modules, but like I said I was just given study material and just told what to do. You know, so my experience of mentorship was not really good. I ended up mentoring myself which meant there was something wrong and for her it was a bonus because if she had to get an IPMS score that was very impressive, she only needed to say I am a mentee and she got a point for that. It was a game, for me it was just, as long as I have professor so and so assisting me and putting that in inverted commas, assisting me, I was the mentee at that time. But I think recently, it is improving because now I am actually getting into my sixth year at Unisa, six or seven, I think six years at Unisa and I am thinking the mentorship programme that has been established by the College of Education is actually improving because you get to work with professors who are knowledgeable who are NRF rated and they actually help you, they help you, it is so different you know than five years ago. It is not a professor who comes in and just put your name there, but she helps you to register for international associations who works with you on your articles, helps you and works with you and teaches you how to be a NRF rated professors. One day you know, may be after five years I want to be an associate professor, I want to be a full professor, so you have these hands on professors now that want to help you but five years ago it was not the case.

Q: You mentioned this thing of working from home. Unisa is an ODL institution, what is your take on it, should it only be for professors? It seems like it is a benefit that is

enjoyed by full professors who are working from home and not by academics who are not professors. What is your take on it?

A: Policy actually allows only associate professors and full professors to work from home. The initial reason from what I understood was that we don't have enough office space, and there is a policy of working, professors working from home that says a professor working from home must come to the University at least once a week, and the problem with working from home is that when you work from home, you would no longer have an office at Unisa, that was the one reason that we don't have enough space. If you are a professor that works from home, you opening space for other people who are at the lower level who can still grow at Unisa. So I think that in terms of an ODL institution, it doesn't really have a negative effect because they are professors working from home. They are actually entitled to 3G, internet access, that is funded by Unisa from the department. They are actually forced by policy to work, I can say may be a little bit of exaggeration 24 hours, and communicate with students, just the same way as we do in the office at Unisa, as people day to day driving in, into the office and again they are funded with a telephone and it is a requirement again that they have to be available on their cell phones and on their landlines at home for students because as an ODL institution they need to be available so that they can assist students because it is could be difficult if students don't find them and they don't respond to e-mails. The same condition applies, the only difference is that they are not on campus and I think another thing could be, I was actually thinking about something now, they are encouraged to meet with their students although they don't have offices. They drive in, remember they must be on campus at least one day in a week and they need to on the other hand make appointments with their students and they can meet on campus or at the restaurant. We have three restaurants on campus, they must make a plan, whether they meet at Brooklyn, but they must meet their students, so as full professors, associate professors, they must meet their students. So I won't really say there is much difference, actually they have more benefits because they don't have to drive in every day, for some of us we have to spend on petrol, for them they save on petrol if they only come once, you know it is a big advantage but it doesn't really disadvantage our students, and what I have seen is that most of our full white professors, male and female they have been using it in the past. It was only recently that we are seeing a lot of Black males applying to work from home and the letter of appointment of being granted the working from home benefit, was agreed that it could

be reviewed every year. So it depends on whether you follow the policy and doing as it says and the CoD must, I am sharing information because I am a CoD because I am able to tell you the process, that is why I know what goes into the letters and everything else, so it doesn't privilege our students, but we are saying if you are a professor working from home, it is a privilege in a way but you must use it wisely and follow policy.

Q: Thank you very much for that information. I am more interested now in your research experiences. How do you find postgraduate supervision at Unisa? Do you have any students that you are supervising at doctoral level, Masters level, how do you find, I mean post graduate supervision?

A: I have four, let me see, I have six Masters' students, and I have two doctorate students. At the moment, ja that is my quota because you work on quotas you know, at my level. I am actually supposed to have only eight, M&D students, but you know my Masters' students two of them are only at proposal stage and they are not counted as the full students, like the normal students and I think I am copying well because so far I have one doctorate student that graduated last year, and then I have two Masters' students that graduated already and the other one is actually submitting for examination at the end of the year, he will graduate next year. So I think in terms of supervision I am doing well, and I think I am getting enough mentorship and I was able to attend the workshop for supervision, and I think my mentors are helping me as well and we are working together with my colleagues, so in terms of supervision I think I am doing well. I am on the right track.

Q: Can you share with me have you published any articles?

A: I have co-authored articles with one professor, she is a full professor in our department, I have co-published with a student and unfortunately that article disappeared because the article was published in a questionable journal. I have published a sole authored article in the same journal, which was discredited because you know it was a questionable journal and I felt it was really unfair because I put so much energy in that article, when the journal was discredited, is it de-accredited?

Q: Dis-accredited, ja.

A: I lost out on those points you know and all that. It was heart breaking but anyway I left it and I moved on and I've opened a new book and I am trying to publish now.

Q: I get it that you don't have a lot of challenges in research up to so far as an individual.

A: As an individual I can't say it is challenges per se but I think I do experience challenges because it is difficult to publish as a researcher.

Q: What is it that you find difficult?

A: You know, getting a journal, because now when you publish into a journal as you are being told it was questionable or was not good enough for your publication and it was not good enough for your institution, or it was high jacked or whatever, then you need to go and look for another journal and you are always being told about good journals that are on IBSS and all these journals so it is difficult first and foremost to get a journal, although we have a list for the College of Education, in fact we have that list that gives you a long list of journals that are there, that are available but you find the so called good journals, they take two or three years to accept your article. Long time and you know you want to grow, you want to publish, you want to be a scholar but when you don't get feedback as quickly as you want to, then it discourages you. It is not only publications, but you need to put it on your students as well, so you end up not having that, getting that balance, then it becomes a problem. So it is still a challenge because and if you don't get enough support, luckily recently with my mentors, things are going well, and I am thinking next year I will publish more, collaboration within the department as well where we have decided we are going to collaborate with colleagues and co-author, instead of doing it alone, it becomes more difficult but when you co-author with colleagues it becomes easier because colleagues are able to help you. So I think starting next year, I've seen where the weaknesses are and then I am trying to co-author with colleagues.

Q: We are about to wrap up our interview. But before we wrap up. I would like to know if there are they any academic development programmes that you have attended since joining the Unisa. May be leadership programmes or programmes related to writing articles or any programme for academic development?

A: Yes, one of the programmes that I still cherish even today and thank Unisa for is the young academic leadership programme. When I got into Unisa, the requirement was that you need to be at least a year at Unisa to qualify to apply for that programme. I got to into that programme while I was not even a year at Unisa, you know and there had to be a motivation why my CoD felt that I was, I must be afforded the opportunity to be part of that programme, because the requirement was that you must at least



have completed 12 months at Unisa but I was, I was nine months, and because of the motivation from my CoD who was a Black male he motivated that I got into the programme. I was accepted in that programme. That programme helped me to be a good academic if I can say, it exposed me to more, what was it like to be an academic at Unisa in terms of your teaching methods, in terms of your teaching and learning, in terms of your research, in terms of, you know all your key performance areas, and we had to go to different parts, different Unisa regions, we went to Umalusi, we were exposed to what it takes to be an academic, and what it involved you know, what energy you need as an academic, so it helped me to realise that I did not make a wrong choice by being an academic. It is what I love, it is what I wanted to do and you now more than that. And I attended a leadership programme, each department, or each college had to elect a person and I think, I think for me, the advantage was my age, because people who have put my name forward felt that as a Black female in my thirties I qualified. I actually gained that experience. I was put in a leadership programme and I attended it for three months. I got these leadership skills, techniques, and how to be a good leader. I was given text books to read, we were given assignments and all that, so it helped me that is why I may be a CoD because I think I got the skill and Unisa invested a lot in me. And all that. So even the mentorship programme, the mentorship programme when it was under human, **College of Human Sciences**, and we attended the mentorship programme and we got the mentors there and you got professors who actually, they didn't just put your name on paper but they helped you, it helped, even now the mentorship programme still continues in the College of Education. I think it is still of benefit, of great benefit, helping us to become better academics and better researchers.

Q: As a CoD now, just one question, is there, are there any programmes that you can think of that may be introduced in future for Black academic women, anything that you can think of, is there anything over the years, that you have realised that can be introduced?

A: You know, I think programmes of may be article writing programmes where we Black researchers can be helped into publishing more, I know Unisa is investing a lot in the previously disadvantaged especially the Black females, because we have programmes, women in research, we have what do you call it, assistance with NRF rating, we have, there is actually a lot, because even, what is this, it is running away from me. Our Masters and doctorate programmes, where you know, the first

preference is actually given to Black academics that they can get their PhD and come back and publish and all that, so I think there is enough support, but I think may be there might be more that can be done.

Q: Yes, okay.

A: But I think that at the end of the day, it depends on the individual and if you are going to be given that opportunity but others don't use it.

Q: My final last question. Do you enjoy being a CoD? A young Black academic CoD in your department and how do you experience it to be a leader, now not as a lecturer but as a leader of the department? How do you experience your career?

A: I think I have grown so quickly within Unisa and I wouldn't say between the ranks, because I still want to be a professor one day, but I think me getting into a leadership position exposed me to many other things that I didn't know within the University. I must say I am enjoying it. I have grown from being somebody who came clueless about ODL, ODeL as it is now known to get somebody who can actually lead a department of 29 individuals and I have nine professors and eight associate professors and you know I think what makes it easy is because I have a department of experienced individuals who are actually willing to give me support. So for me it is an advantage, and I remember people used to worry, to say how you are going to cope with, you are, I am actually the youngest CoD, in the all the ten departments, in the College of Education but you know when I got in, I did not see it as a problem because I thought I have a strong support system. Even from my superior, because my Director, you know he is a very supportive person and you know the professors that I have in the department are hard workers, NRF rated you know, very supportive, one of them actually is my mentor and not only for me to be a researcher and even with my leadership, she tells me when I don't do something correctly and that I really adore and I have really coped well. I am coping well and I am enjoying being a CoD and my purpose now is to get into the next level of being an associate professor and I am hoping if I increase my research outputs next year, you might be talking to an associate professor, CoD.

Q: Thank you very much my colleague for the interview it was nice to listen to your story and your narrative. I will come back for the second time, just to find a date, to verify the transcripts whether what they is written down would be a true version of what you said. Thank you very much for the interview. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

A: Thanks a lot, I am glad to be able to help and hope you will find it useful. Thanks a lot.